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FEATURE
DETECTIVE
STORY

■

The
SHADOW
— of a —
NOOSE

by
Jack Bechdolt

■



Mystery Magazine

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The SHADOW OF A NOOSE

by — Jack Bechdolt

CHAPTER ONE

TOM HALEY PAYS A CALL

PATROLMAN TOM HALEY had an eye for the girls.

A strapping, six-foot, red-haired lad with a tender blue eye and a smile that would melt a pawnbroker's heart is apt to be that way until some one particular girl leads him to the altar and makes it her life work to reform him.

In the handsome blue uniform of the metropolitan force, spick and span and shining of button and buckle and leather, Tom Haley knew himself to be something of a modern Adonis, but that was nothing against him.

So usually Tom Haley spent his leisure calling on young lady friends and taking them out to dances and parties. This day is was otherwise.

Tom Haley had called to pay his respects to a man, an oldish man, and not particularly handsome, either.

Ford Markman, the detective, had been confined to his rooms for three weeks, recovering from a severe attack of grippe. Though he was the most quiet and inconspicuously modest of scholars, the old professor had been occupying considerable newspaper space during his illness. When he was low there had been a daily refer-

ence to his struggle against the disease. Now that he was almost recovered he had ceased to be news, but it seemed as though all the world stopped at his bedside to press his hand and wish him well.

A justice of the supreme court, a famous criminal lawyer and a foreign ambassador had left cards that morning. Markman had sent out his thanks, but begged to be excused from seeing them.

Patrolman Tom Haley, on his way to report for duty, called. Markman ordered him to the inner sanctuary at once and bade him be seated.

"Aw, sure, I've been boring you stiff for more'n an hour," Haley was protesting. "I'll be stepping along——"

"I'm not tired a bit, Tom. Don't hurry. Why, it's done me a world of good just recalling the fun we had together that time we solved the mystery of Rita Parke, the movie star. Stay!"

The detective was no longer in bed. Partially clothed and draped in a dressing-gown, he smiled up from a big chair, a rather short, broad-shouldered, quaint figure of humanity. His bushy hair was white, his face smooth-shaven, broad and creased with many wrinkles. Except that the robe had supplanted a coat, he wore his customary plain wrinkled old-fashioned black suit and the white starched linen with a black string tie.

"Stay, Tom," he repeated, laying his hand over the big, freckled hand of Tom Haley.

"Aw, sure, you look like a million dollars," Haley grinned. "Who says you were ever sick?"

"All over now, Tom. Except an occasional return of laryngitis——"

"Laryn—laryn which?"

"Laryngitis. An inflammation of the larynx affecting the vocal cords. Two weeks ago. I couldn't speak above a whisper. It returns now at odd moments——"

"Lost your voice? Seems to me I read something like that in the newspapers."

"Yes. The reporters had a lot of fun kidding the speechless detective, as they called me."

"Aw, sure, them reporters. So long as it wasn't your brain you lost——"

The telephone signal cut them short.

Markman picked up the instrument, and Haley heard the half of a brief conversation. It was evident somebody wanted Markman's services. Markman explained patiently that he was not taking any cases. There was some argument, for he said finally:

"Yes, put Mr. Wiles on. I'll explain to him. Hello? Mr. Wiles? I'm very sorry, my dear sir, but I am not fit to help you out at present. No. Ah, I realize it must be important, but my condition—I appreciate the honor, my dear sir, but——"

Markman stiffened bolt upright.

His face flushed.

He said coolly:

"My dear Mr. Wiles, money has nothing to do with it. I don't care a damn what you offer me. No. No, again." And with sudden finality: "I take such cases as interest me. What you want is the merchants' protective service. Good-by."

The old detective's dark eyes still flashed as he turned on Haley.

"Some rich men," he observed, "seem to think the world is run by money. That particular one gets my goat, to put it vulgarly. Insulting, nothing else."

"Aw, sure, these rich fellers," Haley sympathized with his ready grin. "They think all they got to do is rattle their loose change and everybody is going to jump through the hoop."

Markman chuckled.

"Well, there is one scared rich man—Orrin Wiles, you know who he is?"

"The big Wall Street man."

"Yes. So rich you'd think he could laugh at anything, if money is all the power he seems to think it is. Yet there he sits right now, in his home, trembling like a mouse because some crook is trying to extort money from him and making cheap threats. He has the nerve to think he can order me in like a dozen eggs from the corner grocery."

The telephone rang again.

"Answer it, please," Markman begged. "Talking tires my voice so."

Haley turned from the instrument, his eyes big.

In a hoarse, awestruck whisper he explained:

"You better talk. It's the Commissioner himself."

"The Wiles case?" Markman said after greetings. "I just refused it. Yes, damn insulting besides. I don't leave my house unless I want to, not even for Orrin Wiles, Commissioner. What! Oho!" There followed a period of silence, Markman listening, his shrewd old face betraying ever increasing signs of interest and animation.

Markman laid his hand over the telephone mouthpiece after a brief "Excuse me a minute" to the Commissioner. He turned to Haley with a whispered "Want to see something interesting, Tom? Want to work with me?"

Tom Haley nodded emphatic assent. Markman turned to the phone.

"I'll do it for you," he said, "on one condition. Try to get hold of that smart young patrolman Tom Haley, Tenth Precinct station-house, and lend him to me for the job, will you?"

When the conversation was completed, Haley said shakily:

"Aw, say, Professor, you did me a fine turn speaking about me to the Commissioner that way."

"I meant it, Tom. And I want you on this case. Things look different now. The Commissioner has a well-founded suspicion that an old friend of mine, none other than the notorious Mr. Gordon Newark, is at

large and engaged in trying to gouge money out of Orrin Wiles. I've got to see this thing through. Hand me my coat, will you, and see if you can't find me a taxi."

A quarter of an hour later the taxi deposited Professor Markman and Tom Haley before a big, exclusive apartment-house on a fashionable street.

Markman explained to Haley:

"Report at your station as usual. I think you'll find orders there detaching you for special duty to join me here. Of course, you are not supposed to know this until you get your orders. I didn't want the Commissioner to think I was playing politics with his organization. But you'll be back soon, I'm sure."

"I'll be back the minute the boss will let me," Haley grinned and hurried down the street.

Markman went into the apartment-house.

The building was occupied by five tenants, people who thought little of paying an annual rental of twenty or thirty thousand dollars. Each tenant had a duplex apartment embracing two complete floors and as elaborate and convenient as a complete town residence on Fifth Avenue or the Drive.

The detective gave his name to a servant in livery, who informed him that Mr. Wiles expected him. The servant conducted Markman to the elevator and turned him over to another servant, a dark-skinned operator who stood ready at his lever in the dimly lighted car.

The elevator shot upward.

Markman's thoughts were centered on the antagonist he had met many times in various tangled plots.

"If you are behind this, Gordon Newark," the detective was remarking mentally, "it will be good to meet you. I owe you something. Really I do for the several times you've fooled me. May we meet face to face."

Had Markman been a psychic, rather than detective, and possessed the ability to read the immediate future, he would have known that he and Newark were about to meet very soon indeed and in a totally unexpected fashion.

CHAPTER TWO

PIECES OF ROPE

ORRIN WILES sat alone before a heavy, carved table in a handsome library.

The room was comfortably warm despite the raw spring day. A fire twinkled in an open grate. There were neatly stacked magazines, all the new ones, convenient to his hand. Cigars stood ready in a humidor. A little stand at his elbow held whisky and a siphon and glasses. The built-in shelves held books, thousands of books, the best thoughts of geniuses of all ages, ready to entertain or inspire Orrin Wiles for the trouble of opening the leaves. Above the shelves were framed canvases, a Velasquez, a Rembrandt, a Vermeer, two Constables. In various points of vantage were several bronzes, one a Rodin, and vases and rare crystal objects, all of these works waiting to delight their owner's eyes. Built into the wall was a splendid pipe organ, with a player attachment, by which a man as unmusical as Orrin Wiles could produce at will any written composition and with the technique of a master.

Orrin Wiles had every means of comfort and entertainment that a man of vast wealth can command, but he was availing himself of none of them.

He sat alone before the broad table, a big, heavy figure in a sack suit of tweeds, fashionably turned out all over. His head was big, rather massive. His face was longish, the skin rough and highly colored as by long tanning of wind and sun. A white mustache drooped over his upper lip. His spare hair was white at the temples and brushed severely in military fashion.

Orrin Wiles's cold blue eyes stared at something before him on the table, something over which his big, strong hands hovered as if fascinated, yet loathing to touch.

The something was nothing more than a short length of rope.

Hempen rope.

It was a light rope, not much thicker than cord, and it had been twisted and knotted at one end into a noose.

Wiles stared at it, breathing heavily like a spent runner.

Spasmodic shivers possessed his big frame. The pale blue eyes showed a sickness of the soul.

Orrin Wiles was terrified by a piece of harmless rope.

The apartment was seven stories removed from the street, inaccessible except by guarded entrances, strong as a fortress. Its owner could, if he chose, spend a lifetime there, a lifetime of splendid isolation. He could laugh at storm and flood and riot and all the dangers that normally threaten mankind.

Wiles did not laugh this day. He was scared—scared by a bit of rope.

Wiles pressed a mother-of-pearl call-button sunk into the table top. A young woman hurried into the library.

She was a slender, pretty girl for all that she wore a very plain business garb of white shirtwaist and tweed suit and had dressed her soft brown hair in one severe knot that tried to eliminate all wave and natural curl.

"No word yet?" Wiles growled.

"No word, Mr. Wiles——"

"Damn this Markman. What the devil does he think he is, a little tin god? I thought the Commissioner——"

"The Commissioner said he had persuaded Professor Markman to take the case. He has scarcely had time——"

Wiles sighed.

"That damn detective," he muttered. "Well, that's all, Miss Burke." His fascinated eyes returned to the hempen loop that lay on his desk.

Mary Burke turned away, her face deeply troubled.

She was Wiles's confidential secretary. For five years she had held that post. She knew more of Orrin Wiles's business than anybody but the man himself.

Never before, in any situation, had Mary Burke seen her powerful employer shaken. She knew him to have unusual business daring. She knew he had more than ordinary physical courage and had grown arrogant with power. And now he sat like a frightened boy staring at a piece of rope.

At the door of the library Mary Burke, startled, paused to listen and turned back suddenly.

"I think he is here now," she said to her employer. "He has come."

Johns, Wiles's butler, appeared in the door as she spoke.

"Professor Ford Markman," he announced.

"Please come in, Professor Markman," Mary bade. She was smiling relief and friendliness toward the quaint figure that hesitated, peering at her, bowing a stiff, old-time greeting.

She led the visitor to Wiles, who rose to greet him, an unusual mark of courtesy on his part.

"Mr. Wiles?" The voice was merely a whisper. "Let me draw a chair close to yours. My illness"—a hand rose toward his throat—"sometimes I am scarcely able to use my voice," he explained.

"Read about that in the papers," Wiles growled. "You look pretty well to me."

"It's only my voice. A trace of laryngitis. Now, Mr. Wiles, you wanted me."

"I certainly did," Wiles grumbled. "Look at that damn thing."

"It looks like rope to me—harmless rope."

"Harmless!" The rich man laughed ironically, but his voice shook.

"That has some connection with the threats made against you? It is a part of this plot you suspect?"

"It's everything, Markman. Who is doing this I don't know. That's for you to find out. And when you do find him, by God, I'll make him suffer for the fright he's given me. You hear me, Markman? I'll make him pay."

"Give me the detailed story," his visitor whispered. "Everything exactly as it happened."

"I'm used to crank letters—and threats," Wiles began in his deep, grumbling tone. "They don't scare me a bit, not the usual kind. This one—this devilish rope, I—Markman, whoever is sending me that rope knows——"

"Knows what?"

Wiles growled abruptly:

"Never mind that. Here is what you need to know. Ten days ago I got a letter. Miss Burke, my secretary, opened it. It was printed. It said, 'This is going to cost you a million dollars.' That was all, except there was a thread pasted to it, a bit of thread, tied into a—a noose." Wiles shuddered.

"Well?" the impatient whisper prodded on the story.

"Another letter came next day, the same printed slip, and with it another noose, this time a string. Next day the same and a noose of thicker string. Next day the noose was of cord. The fifth note enclosed a noose of heavy cord, and the words were added, in type like the other, 'The rope is growing stronger.'"

Wiles turned to the whisky and soda at his elbow and mixed himself a drink, his hand shaking. In dumb show he offered a glass to the listener.

"No, thanks. Bad for my throat. Go on."

"Markman, that kept up nine days. The last one reached my office yesterday, the card, the noose—of light rope this time—and these words added, 'Tomorrow the rope will be strong enough to hang you.'"

Wiles leaped from his seat.

"To hang me!" he cried hoarsely. "Damn them, how do they know—how do they know that I——" He stopped and his fingers began to claw open his linen collar.

"This morning," he choked, "it came. That! That noose you see there. It was folded in the morning paper laid here on my desk. I have my breakfast sent in from the café downstairs. The paper comes on the same tray. There it was, shaken out when I unfolded the paper—the noose and this card." Wiles drew a card from his coat pocket. It was merely a bit of paper, and printed on it neatly in type capitals: "Today the noose will hang you."

The investigator took the card from Wiles's shaking fingers, glanced at it and laid it beside the noose. He then whispered:

"Come, sit down. Nothing to get excited

about. Now, you had these letters investigated, I suppose? Traced?"

"I did everything the post post-office department and fat-headed private detectives could think of," Wiles growled. "No results. And every day the rope got bigger. This last one! Right in my own house!"

"Ah, yes. And how did it get in? Who brings in this breakfast try to your desk?"

"Tokio, the Japanese boy. My staff consists of Johns, the butler; a maid and the Jap."

"I must talk to this Tokio—the maid also, please."

Wiles pressed one of the buttons before him. The butler answered, and presently a Japanese boy in a white coat and a middle-aged maid of undoubted respectability stood before the table.

Tokio's story was simplicity itself.

The boy had gone to the café in the basement of the building for Wiles's breakfast, as he always did. He got the breakfast tray and stopped at the hallman's desk for the morning newspaper, which was laid among a pile of papers waiting distribution. With the paper on the breakfast tray he returned promptly to the apartment and left tray and paper on the table in the library, ready for his master.

The whispered cross-examination developed nothing more.

The maid, having no knowledge of events, had nothing of any interest to contribute.

The white-haired stranger astonished the two servants by his next remark.

"Mr. Wiles will not require your services today," he whispered. "He wishes you to leave the apartment, take a holiday and spend tonight with friends or at some hotel. The butler will supply you with money to pay all expenses. Return tomorrow morning, please——"

"Say, look here——" Wiles began a growl of protest.

The two servants stared open-eyed.

"Do as I say," was the whispered advice. "Whatever devilry is afoot is going to be played out here, that's plain enough

already. If either the Jap or the girl are in it, that eliminates them at once."

"But suppose they are in it? Suppose they run away?"

The investigator chuckled.

"No fear. My men will pick them up as they leave the building, and they'll shadow their every move."

Wiles nodded assent to the orders.

Cautioned to say nothing of events of the morning, the two servants were dismissed.

"Those other two—think you can trust them?"

"Miss Burke and Johns? If I can trust anybody, Markman, it's those two. Johns has been with me twenty years. He hasn't brains enough to think up a plot. As for the girl—she's all right, I'm sure."

"We may need them. At least two are easier to watch than four. And if there is really a plot against your life——"

"Really a plot! I tell you, Mister Ford Markman, somebody is on my trail and he means business. He knows too damn much about me——"

Wiles broke off sharply.

"What was that?" he shouted.

Both men jumped to their feet.

"Only a door closing somewhere."

Wiles jumped to find Mary Burke at his shoulder.

"Oh, it's you. Don't glide in so like a ghost," he sputtered.

There was a trace of a smile on Mary's lips and added roses in her cheeks.

"A policeman named Tom Haley says he must report to Professor Markman," she announced. "He's waiting outside."

"Oh, yes, quite all right, Wiles. I had the Commissioner assign Haley to help me. I'll go speak to him."

"This way," Mary said. They were half-way across the room when a sharp cry from Wiles turned them about.

Wiles stood pointing a shaking forefinger at the chair in which he had sat but a moment before.

Over the chair back dangled a hempen rope.

Its end was looped into a hangman's noose.

CHAPTER THREE

MARY BURKE

PATROLMAN TOM HALEY lost no time reporting at the station house after taking leave of Ford Markman.

As Markman had predicted, orders were waiting Haley to join the detective at once in the apartment of Orrin Wiles. Haley was not more than twenty-five minutes in complying with that request.

An ambulance had drawn up at the door of the apartment hotel which stood just next the one where Wiles lived.

An alert young patrolman, accustomed to notice things, Haley saw that it was a private ambulance, one of those luxurious, curtained, comfortable vehicles used to carry rich patients to expensive hospitals.

As he drew near two uniformed hospital orderlies came out of the building, carrying a stretcher on which lay a swathed figure. The face had been covered with a sheet.

The stretcher was slipped into the ambulance and the vehicle started away as Haley turned into his own destination.

The liveried servant in the hall had some doubts about the desirability of a caller for Mr. Wiles, but Haley's uniform and assurance carried the point.

The dark-skinned elevator operator conveyed him rapidly to the seventh floor and left him in a small reception-hall. Wiles's butler answered the bell and turned Haley over to Mary Burke.

And at the moment the secretary entered the room where he waited Tom Haley was on his feet, his mouth open with a look of comical astonishment.

Mary Burke's face reflected some of the same astonishment.

"Tom Haley!" she exclaimed, and held out her hand.

"Mary! Aw, sure, it is Mary Burke. Why, who'd have thought——"

"It was ten years ago, wasn't it, Tom? Ten years since my folks moved west and we said good-by? And you came to the train to say it. That was nice of you, Tom Haley."

"Aw, sure, Mary, when a girl is carryin' a fellow's heart off with her he's bound to tag along at least as far as the railway station."

Mary laughed and colored.

"I've been back in New York five years," she explained. "Five years, ever since I was hired by Mr. Wiles as his personal secretary. I tried to find you, Tom. I went back to the old block."

"We moved off the block soon after you did, Mary. Then my folks died and I wandered some. In the army a time, then the police force."

How much longer they might have exchanged reminiscences is hard to say, but the words "police force" recalled Mary to the present.

"You were to join Professor Markman, Tom? I'll tell him."

Haley was left alone for a moment. In an adjoining room he saw the butler, Johns, arranging a vase of flowers. From the library he caught the murmur of several voices, then Wiles's sudden, sharp shout of fear.

Haley ran to the library door, ready for any surprise. He knocked and followed the knock by entering.

He saw Wiles pointing shakily at the chair and the noose of hemp dangling over its back. He saw Ford Markman and Mary Burke examine the rope curiously.

Mary started to explain:

"Why, Mr. Wiles, this is the same noose you found this morning. Perhaps it slipped off the desk——"

Wiles snarled something inarticulate and pointed to the other rope, still lying on the broad table.

"Odd," Markman was whispering. "Deuced odd. Somebody slipped one over on me that time." He turned at Haley's approach. "I think we'll have work for you, Patrolman Haley," was his greeting.

Tom Haley exclaimed with some alarm: "Professor Markman! Your voice!"

The detective's hand went to his throat.

"Yes," he whispered, with a shake of the head. "That confounded laryngitis."

"And you feeling so fine not an hour ago. Aw, sure——"

A gesture cut short his sympathy.

"We've got more important considerations now, Haley." Markman was examining the noose of hemp. He compared it with the one on the table. "Thicker," he whispered. "Stronger. Not a word with it this time, but here it is, a bigger rope."

"Big enough to hang a man," Wiles choked.

"Sit down, Mr. Wiles. You too, Haley. Miss Burke, we won't need you. "Now"—the whisper became sharper, peremptory in tone—"Mr. Wiles, this threat against your life, this attempt at extortion, if that's what they mean, has something in it you have concealed from me. There is a significance about this rope. I want to understand that."

Haley was surprised at Wiles's vehemence, as he declared:

"That's got nothing to do with finding whoever is playing this damn rotten game. Find the man, put him in jail, that's what I want of you, Markman——"

"Then tell me the facts. Let me remind you, Mr. Wiles, I am still at liberty to drop this case. I am my own master."

"Aw, sure," Tom Haley cut in, loyal to his friend, anxious to spare that painfully whispering voice. "Aw, sure, what do you think? D'you think a big man like Professor Markman's going to get out of a sick-bed just to be talked to by you like he was a ten-year-old kid? I'm a cop. I got to go where they tell me. Professor Markman don't. He's here to oblige his friend the Commissioner. I advise you, Mr. Wiles, to tell him all he wants to know."

"Thanks, Tom," Markman's whisper rewarded him.

"Anyway, this patrolman doesn't have to hear my private affairs. Now surely, Markman——"

"Haley will stay. Tell me what these rope nooses mean to you—why they have put you in a panic?"

Wiles grumbled under his breath.

"It's an old chapter," he said sulkily. "I prefer to forget it. It was in the Klondike in 1900. There was a lot of trouble about claims and claim jumping. Some scoundrel accused me of crookedness. There was a

mob. They came to my cabin at night. They took me out—to some timber. The noose—the noose was around my neck. I——” He shuddered violently. Before he finished he had to wet his throat from the ready glass. “The Canadian Mounted Police got there just in time,” he whispered. “It was all straightened out later. But a rope throws me into a fit yet. Sometimes I have a nightmare. I see ropes; I feel them around my throat again. I—they affect me the way snakes frighten some people.”

Markman was nodding his head sagely. “You don’t talk of this much, do you, Wiles?”

“Talk of it! Not a living soul that knows me today knows this thing.”

“Ah, but somebody knows. Somebody knows enough to send you these nooses.”

“Yes. And how did this thing get here? Under your own nose. That’s what I’m asking your help for, to put a stop to this threat business. And yet while you sit here, right beside me, that damn noose gets into the room. Are you a detective, or what——”

“Easy,” Tom Haley counseled. “Aw, sure——”

“Your nerves are upset,” Markman whispered calmly. “Pull yourself together, Mr. Wiles. And you, Haley——”

“Yes, sir.”

“First of all, make a thorough search of this apartment, both floors. Have Johns, the butler, show you everything—rooms, closets, laundry chutes, windows, lock every possible means of access from outside. Mr. Wiles’s life is in danger, I’m convinced of that. Whoever has carried on this grisly business isn’t doing it for fun. It’s our business to see that no more ropes get in here. And it’s our business to see there is no tragic ending to what looks like a very sinister sort of practical joke.”

Markman paused, and by a turn of the eyes drew Haley’s attention to Wiles.

The millionaire’s face was pasty white.

The cold blue eyes stared at some grisly specter beyond their ken.

“Scared,” Markman whispered, “scared stiff.”

Haley rose.

“I’ll take care of all that, Professor.”

“One thing more, and this is important. Watch that private secretary, the young woman——”

“Mary Burke?”

“Yes, Mary Burke.”

“Aw, sure, you’re on a wrong tack there.”

“I don’t think so, Haley.”

“But, sure, Professor, listen. She has no hand in this deviltry. Why, I know——”

“Patrolman Haley”—the whisper was sharp—“you are under my orders on this case. Don’t let that young woman out of your sight.”

Haley saluted stiffly.

“No, sir; I will not.”

He left on his mission, muttering under his breath:

“Mary Burke! The idea! As if we didn’t play together on the same West Side block when we was kids. And I knew her father and mother, God rest their souls. Mary, little Mary Burke, mixed up in this? They’ll be saying next I’m the fellow that’s trying to get old Wiles’s million.”

Haley obeyed orders, nevertheless. He found Mary and the butler, and explained his errand of search.

“We’ll all three go and check up on each other,” he suggested.

And as they investigated from room to room, Mary by his side, Tom Haley’s lips twitched with a ghost of a smile.

“Aw, sure, it’s a cinch,” he observed to himself. “Watch Mary Burke? How can I keep my eyes off her?”

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MING VASE

ORRIN WILES stared bitterly at the detective he had summoned by such effort and wire-pulling.

One would think this Ford Markman something extraordinary, the way he coolly

refused to touch the case at all until begged to do so by the Police Commissioner himself.

Wiles had heard a lot about Markman, but he could not credit much of it now. The man looked old. His hair was white, his face tired, his hands slightly tremulous. Just a shabby old-fashioned oddity such as Wiles saw sometimes sitting on park benches—failure in life.

And he had trusted his life to this man.

"Well, Markman," he said bitterly, "are you going to do something?"

"I'm going to do all I can for you. No man can offer more."

"And of course you never fail!" Fright made Wiles's nerves twitch. He said this with a sneer that was, at least, undiplomatic, considering how much depended on the man addressed.

"I sometimes fail."

The whispered admission came without rancor.

"I am only a human being, Mr. Wiles. We all fail at times. And I have no hesitation in telling you that you stand in great peril. Somebody is on your trail for no good purpose. So far they have taken all the tricks in this game. It is my duty to tell you these next few hours may be full of excitement—and very real danger."

The warning roused a more combative spirit in Wiles.

"Bosh!" he said. "I think the whole business is a piece of hokum."

"Including these hemp hangman's ropes?"

The millionaire sputtered.

"They can't scare me. What the devil do they mean?"

"That's the point. This first note you got, that looks like a demand for money—simple enough. Since then there has been no demand?"

"Just threats."

"And the promise of a show-down to-day."

"Yes, today," Wiles agreed, his eyes on the detective. "You take it coolly enough," he thought to himself. "But it's not your neck that's threatened with a nose."

"If it's money they want, how are they going to get it?" Markman was saying.

"Ah, how?"

"Have you any sum of money in this house? Any considerable sum?"

"You couldn't find twenty-five dollars in this house."

"And if demand was made for a check, and you wrote a check to any possible extortionist——"

"I could cancel that check in a wink," Wiles agreed. "And the bank would make it hot for anybody trying to use it."

"Then I have it!" The detective's eyes flashed. "Gems—your gem collection. Worth more than a million. That's in this house."

Wiles hesitated.

"How the devil did you know about my gems?"

"Plenty of people know that. Your collection is famous among dealers and collectors. And if they know, you may be sure clever gem thieves know. And those gems are in this house. Here!"

Wiles nodded cautiously.

"Yes, they are. If it's a ransom they mean to demand, maybe that's what they expect to get."

"Exactly where is your gem safe?"

The millionaire hesitated.

"I—that is my secret. What the deuce bearing has it on your case? I—I'm damned if I think——"

The murmur of voices at the library door came to them. The detective's answer was mollifying.

"Don't answer," he agreed. "Probably it has no bearing on my case."

The white-haired figure rose then and began to prowl the room, stopping to read titles of books on the shelves, peering from windows, examining bric-a-brac. Wiles watched him curiously.

"Well, Professor Markman, it's up to you. Protect my life and my property, and you can ask anything you like."

The bent figure straightened proudly.

"You haven't got money enough to get my services, Mr. Wiles. I am here solely to oblige my very good friend the Commissioner."

"Then, damn it," Wiles flashed, "do something!"

"I am, in my own way. Haley is examining the rest of the house. I merely want to make sure about everything in this room. That rope trick still has me guessing, and I think that sounds like Haley outside the door. Finished his work, probably. Ring for your secretary and the butler, will you? I think it's time to give them all some orders."

Wiles rang. Mary Burke and Johns presented themselves.

At Mary's heels came Tom Haley. His glance at Markman bade the detective observe he was shadowing his suspect.

It was Haley whom Markman first addressed.

"You've been all through the house?"

"All through. Everything locked, safe and fast. Nobody's going to get in to leave any more ropes around."

"I hope so, Haley. And now, Miss Burke and Johns, I think you should know that Mr. Wiles's life has been threatened. The devilish ingenuity that has got that last threat in here under our very noses is going to be a hard foe to combat. I'll admit it's got me guessing. But here sits your employer. His life is in danger. Mr. Wiles has every confidence in both of you. I believe that you are both honest enough and courageous enough to do the right thing by the man who has given you employment?"

"You can count on me," Mary Burke said simply.

"And me," the butler echoed. "I'm not the strong man I once was, but if I had a gun——"

The white-haired detective smiled. "Never mind a gun. I'm afraid of guns in the hands of well-meaning men who may be poor marksmen," he whispered hoarsely. "The five of us are loed in here. There is no human way of aching us from the outside. If we are all loyal to Mr. Wiles——"

"Just a minute, Ma'man," Wiles broke in. He scowled at them all and his voice shook. "I'll pay the highest market price for your services today. Don't forget that!

Stick to me, protect me, and you won't be sorry."

Mary Burke flushed. Her head raised resentfully. "It's not a question of money," she began to protest.

"Aw, sure," Haley growled, "you don't have to bribe me to do what's my duty."

"You'll be paid, all of you," Wiles insisted. "I'll make it worth your while. Only, for God's sake, protect me from this devil that's hounding me to despair."

Wiles got no farther.

Tom Haley turned suddenly and was crossing the room with bounding step.

"Look!" Mary whispered, pointing.

They stared amazed at a huge vase standing near the window.

It was a handsome old piece of Chinese porcelain, nearly as big as a man.

From the mouth of the vase a thread of smoke was rising. In the still air of the room it crawled up straight as a string.

"Look out!" Wiles roared.

Even as he spoke the air was split with a loud report.

Haley leaped backward amidst a shower of earthenware.

The explosion had shattered the Ming vase into a thousand bits, spread far and wide across the room.

Haley approached the scene of the explosion, the others at his heels, fearful of further danger.

"Holy cat!" Haley exclaimed.

Stooping, he snatched something from the ruins of the vase and held it dangling before their eyes—a length of hempen rope dangling its hangman's noose.

Tied to the rope was a small printed card.

It said: "The noose is around your throat, Wiles!"

They read it shakily, all but Orrin Wiles.

Wiles crumpled up and sprawled across the rug.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NOOSE TIGHTENS

MARY BURKE knelt beside her employer, trying with water from the soda siphon to restore his consciousness.

With a glance at Markman for orders, Haley was busily engaged combing the library floor for the debris of the explosion.

The detective made a quaint figure squatting over the spot where the vase had stood, poking the rubbish with his fingers.

Johns, the butler, left the room and returned promptly with broom, dustpan and a basket for the sweepings.

"Look!" Tom Haley exclaimed, holding up bits of charred stuff. "It was a small bomb, closed up in thick cardboard wrappings."

The three of them gathered over the evidence, piecing Tom's find out with other bits.

"A small bomb, you're right," the detective approved in his habitual whisper.

"Somebody must have planted it there, Professor Markman! Aw, sure! Along with the rope and the cord. It had a time fuse! Say, maybe it was the Jap or the maid did it before they were sent away."

"I never trusted that Tokio!" Johns declared indignantly.

"It might have been them," Markman whispered. "It might have been somebody else."

"Aw, sure, but who, Professor?"

Mary Burke interrupted.

"I think Mr. Wiles is seriously ill. It seems like a stroke of some sort. Please help me."

Mary had lifted Wiles's head on her knee while she ministered to him.

The millionaire's face was curiously suffused.

His eyes had opened, but there was yet no intelligence in them. The pupils were almost hidden, so far had the eyeballs turned in their sockets.

Haley knelt beside the stricken man. "Looks like apoplexy, Professor Markman."

"Call a doctor!"

Johns sprang to the telephone. He rattled the hook vigorously.

The others watched Wiles anxiously.

"I can't get anybody," John complained.

Haley relieved him at the task. "Professor," he groaned, "this phone is dead. Somebody's cut the wires!"

"I'll run downstairs and put in a call from the hall exchange," Mary offered.

"No," the whispered order came promptly. "We all stay right here. Anyway, see, he's better now!"

Wiles was rallying.

His hand fumbled anxiously at his throat. His face became more placid. Apparently he was reassured that no noose was tightening there. "Let me up!" he murmured, and they helped him to a chair.

"Mr. Wiles, you've had a bad shock," the whispering detective explained. "I think we'll get you comfortably into bed. You'll be safe and out of harm's way. Help me, Haley. Johns, you show the way to his bedroom."

Haley at one side, the detective at the other, they walked very slowly, supporting a limp burden.

Mary Burke followed anxiously.

The master's bed-room was on the second floor of the apartment. The handsome chamber had been furnished completely in a suite of heavy carved oak brought from an old French chateau. The huge old canopy bed, its wine-red curtains, stood in the center of the floor.

Johns, preceding the invalid and his supporters, threw the curtains open.

The detective and Haley half lifted, half boosted Wiles to the counterpane, raised high by mattress and springs.

As they did so Mary Burke uttered a hair-raising shriek.

Johns started back, his face white, his hand grasping a chair for support.

The other two, looking up, saw something stirring in the draperies that canopied the bed.

Wiles's staring eyes saw it, too—something that seemed to move like a sinuous yellow serpent and come looping and twining down upon his head—the hempen rope with its hangman's noose.

CHAPTER SIX

ORDERS ARE ORDERS

THERE was a deathly silence in the bedroom.

Orrin Wiles lay like a dead man, frightened into unconsciousness by the noose that dangled in his face.

Johns was clinging fast to the chair-back, staring at the bed and gasping audibly.

Mary Burke had clasped her hands against her breast and stood upright, stock still.

The two men who had just laid Wiles down were peering at the dusky canopy above. Tom Haley's hand slipped under his coat and came out with a pistol ready and pointing upward.

Through the deathly still apartment, apparently from the floor below, came suddenly a faint, muffled sound, a sound as of a closing window or door.

The detective started up.

"Haley," he ordered harshly, "get down there and examine every room and door and window. If somebody broke in——"

Tom Haley slipped from the room with long strides, soft-footed as a cat, his pistol ready.

From one empty room to another Haley moved with speed and caution. Nothing was disturbed. There was no trace of intrusion. Satisfied of this, he returned in ten minutes to the bedroom.

There he gaped with consternation.

Ford Markman crouched low, a pistol in his hand.

The weapon-covered Johns, the butler, and Mary Burke.

Johns had backed against the wall. His hands were high over his head. He looked white and shaken.

Mary held her hands close at her sides and stared. She, too, was pale.

Haley's appearance was greeted with a sharp question.

"Nobody got in. We must have heard something from outside," the patrolman answered promptly, and stared at the tableau.

"Haley, hold that woman!" The order came harshly, in a voice no longer a whisper.

Haley flushed resentment, but he moved quickly to Mary's side and laid his hand on her arm.

Markman walked rapidly to the butler. One hand held the pistol on his prisoner, the other searched him for a weapon and then, snatching open his coat, drew from an inner pocket a length of new rope knotted in that familiar death noose.

The detective held it up for Haley's inspection.

"These two are under arrest," he whispered hoarsely. "Haley, take them to the station."

Tom Haley sputtered: "Aw, sure, arrest Mary Burke?"

"Book them both! I'll make the charge later. I think this clears up our little mystery."

"But, Professor, Mary Burke——"

"Haley,"—the whispering voice grew sharp again—"must I remind you to obey orders?"

"No, sir," Haley choked. "Come on, both of you. Go on ahead of me. Shall I call the wagon, Professor?"

"No; hail a taxi."

"Yes, sir. And shall I send a doctor in?"

"No. Send nobody. Wiles is all right. Just a bad shock, and a coward's heart. I will stay right here beside him until you return. Get your prisoners to the station, the quicker the better."

Tom Haley stared sadly at the old detective, whom he trusted more than any man alive. He had worked with Ford Markman numerous times on strange cases. He had stood beside Markman in many tight places; he, nor any other man, had ever known Markman to fail. Markman had given his orders. Haley must obey.

But Haley's hand rested on the warm arm of Mary Burke—Mary, his old playmate of happier days on a quiet West Side block.

It went sorely against Tom Haley's nature to take Mary Burke to a jail.

Mary Burke could do no wrong. Haley knew it, and yet Ford Markman never made a mistake, and orders were orders.

"Walk ahead of me, you two," Haley choked, "you're under arrest, and don't forget it."

Haley and his prisoners descended to the first floor of the apartment.

"Wait," Haley ordered; "Mary would be needing a wrap."

"My cape is here, just by the outer door, and my hat," Mary said quietly.

"Get them on, then," Haley exploded suddenly. "Aw, sure, Mary Burke, you never had a hand in this. You never did, Mary."

Mary's lips trembled and tears came into her eyes.

"Thank you, Tom," she said softly.

As she spoke she lifted her cape to her shoulders.

From the folds of the garment fluttered several printed slips that strewed the floor at her feet.

Haley could read the message on these papers without stooping. In those damned capitals he knew too well was printed on each slip, "The noose is around your throat, Wiles."

"Good God!" Haley groaned. Then savagely: "Ready, both of you. We'll be on our way to jail."

"Tom Haley, wait!"

Haley glanced over his shoulder at the command.

Ford Markman stood at the library door.

"Yes, Professor Markman? Sure, I thought you was still watching Wiles."

From below stairs came the sound of the opening and closing of the door.

He listened still and heard the faint, ghostly whine of the elevator ascending and descending its shaft.

Tom Haley was on his way to the station-house with his prisoners. The man's lips twisted into a smile. He turned back to the bed.

His hands seized the hangman's noose that still dangled in Wiles's face. Propping up the inert figure with a pillow, he slipped the noose about Wiles's throat and tightened it.

From his pocket he took a small vial of volatile salts and applied them to Wiles's nostrils.

The millionaire gasped, struggled slightly and opened his eyes. His hands flew to his throat, grasped the hempen loop and a low cry of fear came from his lips.

"Markman!" he gasped. "Ford Markman, you devil!"

The other glanced about from habitual caution and jerked the curtains of the bed canopy about them for further privacy.

"Wiles," he said, and his voice was harsh and sharp, "that rope's ready for you now! If you're going to beat the noose this time you'll have to work fast!"

"Markman! Good God, man, what does this mean?"

"Listen!" The command was a snarl. "That safe with your gems. Where is it? I want the key or combination, whichever it is. It's those gems or your life. Choose quickly! If you want the police to come in here and find you hung by the neck in your own bed, just try to hold out on me now!"

"Markman——"

"Markman be damned! I'm not Markman. Get that straight. I am the man that wants those gems of yours—all of them—and I want 'em quick! Markman can't help you now, Wiles! I took care of him an hour ago. We're all alone in this house." The speaker's lips lifted in a grin that was more a bestial snarl than any human emotion.

"Speed it up!" he snapped. "The stones or you hang!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

GORDON NEWARK

IN the bedroom where Orrin Wiles lay inert across the big canopy bed, the quaint, white-haired figure in old-fashioned, loose-fitting black clothes, stood waiting and listening, his wrinkled face creased into many lines of alert caution.

His hand seized on the rope and the noose tightened about Wiles's throat.

Wiles choked. His waving hands implored a truce.

His captor released the rope slightly.

"Talk fast," he advised.

"The safe—in the wall, just above that big chest of drawers—behind the painting there——"

"And the combination?"

Wiles gasped the figures, the bogus detective repeating them. "Good!" he agreed. "I'll just make you snug while I work."

His hand wound Wiles in the hempen rope and knotted him tight.

"Now," he snarled, "if you double-crossed me, if you delay me even by a minute on that damned combination, God help you! You hang!"

He turned and swept aside the hangings of the bed.

Facing him, not two feet away, stood Ford Markman.

Behind Markman Tom Haley crouched.

Both men held pistols ready.

The bogus Markman, so like him that even facing the famous detective the resemblance was uncanny, pressed back against the bed, gaping. His hands rose high in obedience to the menacing weapons.

Tom Haley pounced and pinioned the arms, snapping handcuffs into place.

Ford Markman chuckled.

"Caught you this time, Gordon Newark. Caught you with the goods!"

Orrin Wiles, still pale and shaken, sat again in his library and listened to Ford Markman.

The detective was summing up his case for Wiles's information.

"Newark at one time and another has been on the stage as a mind reader, a magician and again as an impersonator. His skill at make-up I must admit is positive genius.

"I know that Newark played an engagement in dance halls along the Yukon during the Klondike excitement. It was doubtless there that he picked up this story about your nearly being lynched by the mob of miners, Mr. Wiles, and he came to know your dread of ropes.

"His purpose today was simple enough. It was the gems he wanted.

"The beauty of his plan was its bold simplicity. After his follow-up campaign of threats by mail he smuggled that first noose into your morning paper as it lay waiting for you at the doorman's desk in the hall. He guessed, and correctly, that would give you sufficient fright to keep you at home.

"Newark had two men to help him, and I am happy to say I got them into the hands of the police before ever I got into this place. The elevator operator was also in their pay, and he, too, is under arrest now.

"Your telephone was tapped by these crooks, working from the roof of this building. In that way they knew of your call for me and Newark was prepared to take my place.

"Newark is something of a criminal genius, you see. His purpose was to get your gems. To do that he had to get into your home without exciting suspicion. The threat delivered with your morning paper did the trick, for he figured, and correctly, that you would appeal for help. I'll give him credit for guessing that you would appeal to me. And when I left my home for this apartment-house Newark knew it and was prepared.

"I stepped into the elevator downstairs. It took me directly to the roof of this building and Gordon Newark's confederates were ready for me. I was overpowered, tied and gagged before I realized something had gone wrong with my plans. They did not risk inquiry by taking me out of this building, but carried me across the roofs and out of the building next and on a stretcher, mind you, to their own waiting ambulance!"

Markman stopped to laugh.

"The man really is a criminal genius!" he repeated.

"The Court will give him life for this if I have any influence left," Wiles growled.

"Knowing this," Markman resumed, "you can understand the rest. It was simple for Newark, impersonating me, to get rid of some of your servants at once. To get rid of Miss Burke and Johns, whom you trust, it was necessary to plant a little evidence against them. Therefore Newark

arranged your successive frights, dropping a noose over the chair you had just risen from, planting another along with an explosive bomb in the Ming vase and the third in the canopy of your bed.

"For a man who was once one of the best magicians on the stage it was no trick to uncoil the incriminating rope from beneath the butler's coat, nor to plant a few incriminating cards in the folds of Mary Burke's cape.

"In fact," Markman chuckled again, there was just one thing Gordon Newark overlooked—just one."

"What?" Wiles grumbled.

"He should have murdered me; he really should," Markman smiled placidly.

"His impersonation was excellent. Good enough to fool Tom Haley, who knows me fairly well, especially since Newark whispered. My laryngitis attack gave him that excuse, and the man realizes the extreme difficulty of counterfeiting another human voice in all its habits of inflection unless there is a chance to study that voice thoroughly—and that chance Newark has never had.

"His getting rid of your servants was good, and using Haley to arrest Mary Burke and the butler left him alone with you, the opportunity he has been working for so industriously. But he really should have murdered me when he had the chance."

"You talk as if getting murdered was a joke!"

"It's no joke," Markman explained. "But from Newark's point of view, clemency toward me was fatal. I know something about tying men myself, and I know

knots and their weaknesses, and I knew enough to play possum at the right time. I was at liberty to jump from their imitation ambulance long before I did, but I chose to jump at a crowded corner where there was a policeman on duty."

Markman laughed again heartily.

"It was good comedy, the commotion over what they thought was a patient in delirium escaping from his keepers. But it got the keepers into jail and got me started back here in a taxi. I slipped in just before Haley left with his prisoners. The rest you know."

There was a knock at the library door. Tom Haley and Mary Burke entered together.

"Would you be needing me any longer, Professor?" Haley inquired sheepishly.

"Not for an hour or so, at least, Tom."

"Well, Miss Burke was going to take the air. After the fright she got she needs it. And—well, I thought if it was convenient to everybody, why, I'd just see that she was safe on her walk."

Markman chuckled. "That's right, Tom, almost anything can happen to a pretty young lady these days—especially walking these quiet streets in the daytime!"

"Well," Tom grinned abashed; "you never can tell!"

When they were gone Markman advised Orrin Wiles earnestly: "This morning is going to cost you a treasure, I'm afraid."

"If you mean money—"

"I do not. I mean Mary Burke. You are in acute danger of losing a very good private secretary. If I'm wrong, I don't know anything at all about Tom Haley. But my guess is that he's a devil with the girls!"

NEW WAY OF SWINDLING TRAVELERS

A NEW phase of the confidence trick reported to Scotland Yard, London, takes the form of victimizing people traveling in boat trains when leaving England. Nearing the end of the journey men in their shirt sleeves walk along the corridors, telling first-class passengers they are em-

ployees of the railway company and asking if the travelers desire to exchange foreign money. In a large number of cases notes have been handed over by travelers. When the train stops, however, the men fail to reappear. As a result of this new kind of fraud special watch is being kept.

The Brown Bag

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

C ARHART focussed his gaze upon the steel door of the safe built in the massive wall of the library. He noted that it was usually concealed from view by a cleverly arranged yet innocent-looking panel. When the old millionaire, Roger Merriwether, finished manipulating the combination, he with quite an effort drew open the wonderfully built door of the safe.

"You see, Carhart, there is no such little packet here," he complained, with a note of distress in his voice that was undoubtedly caused by some other than mere financial loss.

"It certainly does not seem to be in any of the compartments, for a fact, sir," admitted the Headquarters detective; then added: "But how about those small drawers, Mr. Merriwether?"

Carhart had a well-earned reputation for cleverness second to none among his mates, and his ability to keep his as well as his employer's secrets. This caused Felix to be dispatched to the well-known millionaire's home in hot haste that afternoon, when Mr. Merriwether phoned for the counsel and assistance of a discreet detective officer.

"It looks as though your safe holds no such little packet just now, Mr. Merriwether; you remember putting it away here, do you, sir?" the detective went on to say, after a useless search of the drawers.

"I have gone over it all in my mind, and can say I distinctly recollect doing so," came the positive answer, as though the old financier felt thoroughly satisfied on that point.

"Please repeat the circumstances, sir, so I may get them rightly placed before I begin to figure out the answer to your little problem; for it surely has one, you may depend upon that, sir."

"It is very simple, Carhart. I purchased this particular sunburst with the intention of springing an agreeable surprise on my favorite niece, whom I am expecting home from Europe. It was an unusually fine piece of the jewelry craftman's art, with the central diamond a gem of purest water. I will not tell you the figure it cost me.

"I dropped the package when it was handed to me by the proprietor into the empty brown leather bag I had with me, snapped the bag shut, and maintained a continuous grip on it, despite an infirm handle, until I was safely seated in my own car. I came directly home and entered this library as soon as I was let in."

"Did the tall, sombre-looking man who ushered me in here come to the door when you rang yesterday afternoon?"

The gentleman smiled and nodded his head.

"Why, yes, to be sure—that is Buttles, my butler—been with me nearly twenty years now—steady old chap as a rule, and has but one small failing that about twice a year clutches him."

At that the detective chuckled audibly.

"I imagine you mean he has an irresistible temptation to forget his dignity and go off on a spree. It happened that I noticed your staid Buttles last night enjoying himself hilariously at one of the lake-shore resorts in company with two pretty girls. He turned up today, I suppose, repentant and very humble? Well, it's an exceptional butler who hasn't some little weakness that breaks loose at certain times. Did he come to the library with you, sir?"

The financier frowned.

"I hope, Carhart, you are not suspecting that honest John Buttles could be guilty,

of this strange robbery? But since you ask me, I remember now how he was just at the library door when he heard the phone bell ring in the smoking-room at the end of the hall and hurried away."

"He came back a minute or so later, didn't he, and said you were wanted at the phone, sir?"

"Just that occurred, though how you guessed it puzzles me, Carhart."

"When you returned to the library, what happened then, and how long were you gone, would you say at a venture?"

"Perhaps all of ten minutes—it was an urgent call from my broker concerning some heavy deals in stocks. When I got back I found I had been careful to close the safe door and swing the panel before quitting the room—a sort of instinct that comes with long habit, I suppose. And on opening the bag I discovered it to be empty! Yes, I was a bit puzzled at first, but presently remembered placing the packet in one of the safe drawers, just as I had so carefully planned."

"You positively recollect doing that, Mr. Merriwether?"

"You heard me make that statement, sir; though I do admit I must also have closed the safe, then lifted the empty bag to the top of that desk over yonder, where I usually stow it."

"You have not mentioned your loss to Buttles, I assume?"

"Most certainly not. When I failed to discover a trace of the sunburst in the safe I again examined the brown bag; but, just as I expected would be the case, it was absolutely empty. It was then, sir, that I dumbly realized I must have been robbed. The mysterious crime was what you professional men would doubtless term an inside job. I phoned the Chief, whom I know personally, and asked him to send up his most discreet detective. You understand, Carhart, all this is to be kept positively *sub rosa*!"

"Depend upon me for that, sir. I believe you have a son, Mr. Merriwether?"

The old man started, and even winced, though what might be termed a defiant gleam came into his eyes.

"An adopted son, rather, Carhart; but a fine young chap at that, and of whom I am very fond. He may have his little failings, as most young men; but take my word for it, you are barking up the wrong tree if you allow yourself to point the finger of suspicion at Anthony."

"Far be it from me to assume anything at this early stage of the game, Mr. Merriwether," the detective hastened to observe.

Nevertheless, after further questioning on the part of Carhart he somehow or other seemed to incline to the belief that either Buttles, the exemplary old butler, had fallen under sudden temptation and closed the safe, after purloining the valuable sunburst, or else young Anthony, finding himself desperately in need of more cash than his regular allowance, had been gripped by a desire to possess the dazzling gem-studded trinket.

Felix started out that very afternoon, bent upon leaving no stone unturned in order to add new and convincing facts to those already in his possession.

From a rich young friend, who chanced to be a member of one of the clubs to which Merriwether's adopted son belonged, he had his first worth-while tip. There was of course a woman in the case, as so nearly always happens. Felix recognized the name at once, for it was that of a young and pretty as well as charming actress, who for the past year had been quite a favorite on the comedy stage.

Carrying out his hastily arranged plan of campaign, Felix found himself settled in one of the front rows of seats that same night at a well-known theatre, where the fascinating Mabelle had held forth, setting her audiences in a frenzy of excitement and admiration over her stage witchery.

Even Felix admitted that the girl was unusually attractive, with her winning ways and excellent acting. His inquiries had elicited the fact that she seemed to have a good name, at least so far as gossip went.

It was easy work to discover where Anthony sat in one of the boxes, since the girl's most radiant smiles and blown kisses after each fresh burst of applause were usually directed in that especial quarter.

He looked to be a fairly decent sort of youngster, Felix decided, after studying the boy a bit; but then when the fever of star worship runs riot in the veins of impetuous youth who can account for the actions of the smitten one?

It was with the opening of the last act that Felix heaved a really disconsolate sigh, as though his expectation of an interesting case had suddenly gone to smash.

The lovely little star had come into her own at last—her erstwhile shabby attire, worn so becomingly while she played the part of a street flower-girl, had given place to garments befitting the long lost daughter of the Wall Street magnate.

How the glitter of the gems on her person did cause exclamations akin to awe and rapture amidst the feminine portion of the audience! But the detective's argus eyes were focussed on a magnificent diamond sunburst that nestled caressingly on her snowy bosom, its central stone a gem of wondrous size and apparent great value.

And that poor foolish moth in the box applauded her appearance on the stage, just as though there might be no inevitable harvest following the sowing of his wild oats. Felix began to really feel sorry for the dupe of dazzling eyes and honeyed words.

Then and there he actually determined to try and save Anthony from the pitfall that threatened to engulf him; for the girl, like most of her type, was sure to throw him down once his adopted father had cast him off. If only the boy would show a disposition to meet his advances in the right spirit he fancied it might be done without the old gentleman being any the wiser. Perhaps the sunburst might be recovered and placed in the safe, to be discovered by the badly puzzled financier, who would likely begin to believe age was dimming his eyesight and distracting the keenness of his mind.

With some such Big Brother intention governing his actions—rather a queer feeling, you must admit, for any detective to experience—Carhart actually followed Anthony and the actress when they entered a private car after the show was over. He

sat not many feet away when they dined at a well-known cabaret, so he could note the fond looks that passed between the pair.

Later he shadowed them to the hotel which was patronized by the fair Mabelle; saw them part company with much light-hearted laughter, but somewhat to his surprise there was no outward exhibition of mad adoration on the part of the young man, such as the detective had anticipated. All of which caused the astute detective to gnaw his nether lip and cogitate along other lines.

It was not difficult for Carhart to enter his waiting taxi and follow when Anthony headed toward home. So it came about that after seeing the likable young fellow leave his car at a public garage within a block or so of the Merriwether house, Felix, obeying a sudden impulse, decided to have it out with him then and there. He quickened his steps and soon overhauled his quarry, swinging along and enjoying a cigarette.

Upon hearing his name called, Anthony turned and looked at the other expectantly. The detective rather fancied he was settling himself for some species of football tactics, in case a holdup were attempted. These streets of the aristocratic section were hardly safe at night in after-the-war times, when crime was so rampant.

"You do not know me, Mr. Merriwether, for we have never chanced to meet until now," blandly observed the man who had halted Anthony; "my name is Felix Carhart, and I am from Police Headquarters."

"Oh, indeed; then I presume you might be a detective?" exclaimed the young fellow, just as coolly and as unconcerned as you please, Felix noted, considerably to his surprise. "What can I do for you, Mr.—er—Carhart, I believe you said?"

"I have decided to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Merriwether," observed the other; "perhaps you will understand that the best thing to do under the circumstances is to work with me, so as to untangle this nasty snarl. It has not yet gone so far but what, providing the young lady proves herself open to reason, a restitution may be ef-

fected, and your respected father may never learn the truth."

Anthony looked the officer over attentively.

"See here, Mr. Carhart, you're certainly twisting me all up over something. I don't seem to grasp your meaning worth a cent, but your reference to a young lady gives me an idea that you may mean Miss Mabelle Standish. Suppose, sir, you go a little further and explain just what all this means."

"I shall be most happy to do so, since the sooner this affair is closed the better for me. It happens that I was taken off a really big case in order to answer the hurry call of your father, who, it seemed, was in a peck of trouble."

Thereupon he proceeded to outline the whole matter in as brief a space of time as possible, meanwhile keeping his keen eyes fastened on Anthony's attentive face, in the glow of a nearby street electric light. To his surprise, the youngster, though undoubtedly deeply interested in the recital, betrayed no undue anxiety or embarrassment. Indeed, toward the end Anthony even chuckled softly, as though amused.

"Thank you for being so kind as to feel an interest in my welfare, Mr. Carhart," he hastened to say heartily enough, "but really there is no ground for the slightest suspicion to be directed toward me as the guilty culprit. You must look elsewhere for the thief. I can easily prove by a dozen witnesses that I spent the entire afternoon yesterday playing in a billiard match at my club.

"As for the wonderful sunburst that dazzled your eyes, even as it has dazzled thousands of others during the last three months, when Mabelle came on the stage, she purchased it last November and can show you the bill of sale, just as she did to me, so as to prove they are stage diamonds, really not worth a tenth of what people chose to believe.

"Do you know, Mr. Carhart, just because of the real interest you've shown in my behalf I'm tempted to tell you something that may startle you, and I'll rely on your discretion to keep it a dead secret. Ma-

belle, the idol of the public, is really and truly *my own sister Belinda!* You see, we were separated as children at an orphan asylum, and each of us became favorites of Fortune. She won her destiny, while I had mine thrust upon me by chance, when Mr. Merriwether chose to take a great fancy for me as a boy and adopted me. Only by a mere accident did Belinda and I discover this amazing truth, after we had become acquainted.

"You naturally wonder why I have never told my foster-father about the queer freak of Fate that gave me back the sister whom I had lost so long ago. If you knew how bitterly he detests the stage, and all who make their living behind the footlights, due, I fancy, to something he suffered in his own salad days, you would understand my silence.

"But Belinda expects to be married this summer to a wealthy and altogether fine gentleman, whom Mr. Merriwether knows and esteems. It will occur at some remote place, so as not to get into the public prints, and, of course, she expects to abandon her promising career. Later on she will be discovered as my sister, and then father can meet and love her, even as I do. That is all, Mr. Carhart; I hope I have not caused you any undue disappointment because of my pricking your bubble?"

"On the contrary, my boy," said the detective earnestly, as he shook the offered hand of the other at parting, "you have eased my mind in many particulars. Congratulations—and good-night. Depend on me to keep your delightful little secret."

Punctually at nine o'clock on the following morning Carhart entered the Merriwether library, to find the old financier, in dressing-gown and slippers, enjoying his breakfast. He seemed to fancy having this matin meal *al fresco*. All men have a touch of Bohemian blood in their veins.

"What news, Carhart?" he demanded, after the discreet Buttles had retired, softly closing the door after him.

"I think I am on the track of the missing jewel, Mr. Merriwether," replied the detective, with an encouraging smile. "Allow me to have a closer look at your little

brown hand-bag, which I notice remains just where you pointed it out to me yesterday afternoon. By the way, sir, didn't you happen to mention that it had a weak, or partly broken handle or grip? You surely must have been mistaken, for this bag seems to be perfectly sound in all respects, though perhaps it is a little bit shabby."

"It may be," Merriwether started to say, "that I am commencing to lose my wits with advancing age, for on my word, Carhart, I seem to plainly remember noticing how much the bag needed a new handle, especially when carrying such a treasure as that wonderful sunburst. Perhaps I only fancied, also, that I accepted the packet from the hand of the jeweler and placed it inside my bag."

Felix answered: "No, I believe all that occurred, sir, and you actually fetched the packet home; but about your placing it in the safe, as you seemed to take for granted was the case, ah! that would be another question entirely. But let me see if I cannot solve the budding mystery before it gets beyond our depth. Will you please summon Buttles, sir?"

"Carhart, I shall do as you direct, and see what comes of it."

In answer to his imperative ring the queer old butler presently put in an appearance. He looked somewhat uneasy; but then Buttles was no fool, and even if quite innocent of any wrong-doing he must certainly have noticed how something unusual was troubling his employer, and even possibly suspected the real character of the strange, quiet-looking gentleman.

"Buttles, I have a question to ask you," the detective remarked, pleasantly enough and not in the least attempting to alarm the other, for he did not mean to copy after the iniquitous Third Degree pattern of brow-beating.

"Yes, sir," the butler answered, looking Felix directly in the face with his faded yet still humorous eyes.

"You came in here yesterday afternoon, when Mr. Merriwether was talking at the phone, and changed his little brown bag for this one, did you not?"

"Yes, sir," Buttles replied, and there was no faltering of the voice perceptible.

"What object did you have in doing so in such a hurry?" pursued the now smiling detective, sure of his ground.

"Why, you see, sir, I had noticed that the bag he was taking with him downtown each day needed a new grip, and as he often carried valuable papers in it I fetched the other one from the attic, meaning to change them at the first favorable opportunity. I happened to think of it just as he went to the telephone in the smoking den and, having the shabby one handy, I made the exchange."

"Did you open the bag, so as to make sure it was actually empty, Buttles?"

"No, sir, I took that for granted, because he had set it aside where he always does when through for the day. But it would be easy to remedy my mistake, if in my hurry I did make one, for I took the other bag to the attic, to lie there until it might be sent to the trunk shop for repairs."

"Very good, Buttles," remarked the detective, encouragingly, "suppose you fetch it here then, and without looking inside, remember."

The old butler hurried off, and Mr. Merriwether, now all smiles, eagerly awaited his return. He soon reappeared, his leathery, wrinkled face wreathed in a positive grin.

"There's something inside, for I could hear it when I shook the bag," he announced, with more or less importance.

"Hand it to Mr. Merriwether, Buttles; now please open it, sir, and settle this little episode."

A moment later the pleased financier took a wad of white tissue-paper out of the bag, which, on being opened, disclosed a box. When he held this up to exhibit that dazzling conceit of the jeweler's art, Buttles was heard to emit a sigh of sincere admiration, perhaps tinged with relief.

As for Carhart, he was actually startled to observe how wonderfully this costly sunburst resembled that similar ornament worn by the altogether charming Mabelle, and which young Anthony had so earnestly assured him was studded with mock gems known as stage jewelry.

As In a Glass Darkly

By CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

MY friend Hobo Bill usually dropped in upon me twice a year—in the fall when he was going southward to avoid the chill of approaching winter and in the late spring when he was going northward. He slouched up to my gate, dropped himself over it and watched me at my gardening.

My eyes are weak, and when I am working in the sunshine I am compelled to wear goggles fitted with smoked glasses. This, of course, dims my sight and makes me slow to see and to recognize people. Not until Bill hailed me with a "Hello, Four Eyes!" did I notice him and come forward with outstretched hand.

"Glad to see you, Bill!" I cried. "Come in. Eat, drink and be merry, and tell me some of the tales of the road. I was afraid the goblins had got you."

Bill shook his head frowningly.

"They came damn near it, I'll tell the world," he growled. "They got my buddie and they got my goat. Say, Doc, honest to God, how much stock do you take in them old tales of wizes that sells their souls to the devil an' gets a sub-devil to protect them as long as they keep their side of the bargain?"

"What do you mean by wizes?" I asked, to gain time to think.

"Wizes? Plural of wiz, otherwise wizard; masculine of witch." Billy had had a grammar-school education in his younger days.

"Oh! Wizards and familiar spirits," I chuckled. "I never knew any personally; but lots of people, the wisest of their day, believed in them religiously—or irreligiously. The Bible says the Witch of Endor raised a Samuel at Saul's request. I don't exactly believe in wizards, but I'm a little afraid of them."

I was, too, and with reason, though I did not care to explain—not just then, at least.

"Same here. Only I'm a darn sight more'n a little afraid of them. One of them, not so far from this very spot, killed Jack and scared me out of a year's growth last fall. That's why I went north by another way this spring. But there's a lot of money in it and—well, I turned around and came back. Don't you know no way to lay a devil an' git the gold he guards?"

"Humph!" I paused to consider, then went on: "Your tale interests me strangely," I said. It did, too. "Come in and tell me all about it. There are spells that are said to overcome demons. But come in and tell me."

We went in and I brought out my best home brew, which I had known to loosen many a tongue that seemed far more reluctant to wag than Bill's.

Bill drank deeply, and shook off some of the worry that had oppressed him.

"Say! That's good," he observed. "If I'd had some of that when the devil got Jack things might have been different. That's the trouble with these reformers; they goes and abolish somethin' without ever takin' into account that a man's likely to need it mighty bad when he ain't really sick so's anybody but a bootlegger would notice it; an' of course you can't take a bootlegger with you on a private little expeditious like Jack an' I was on. Oh, hell; I'm 'way off key. Say, d'you know the house of Henry Holte, the Hermit of Holte Swamp?"

I gasped. Know Henry Holte's house, with its gray stone walls, its massive doors, its iron-barred windows? Oh, yes, I knew it—knew the building and the laboratory

it housed; knew the rock island in the midst of the swamp on which it stood; knew the foul slime that oozed up between the logs of the corduroy road that led to it; knew the swamp creatures that buzzed or squawked or hung like masked death from the lichened boughs. Oh, yes, I knew it. For four long years I had lived there, a nephew (and servant) upon whose fears Henry Holte had loved to play, till I was half mad with terror. Again and again I had tried to run away, only to be haled back and threatened with nameless shapes of horror whose memory the years could never dull. Desperate at last and strong for my fifteen years, I had struck my jailer down and had fled house and swamp and State. Twenty years later I had returned and had gone to see Henry Holte, my only known relative on earth, and had been driven from his door.

That was nearly ten years before, and since then I had seen him only once, when with others I had stood in the house some weeks before and looked down on his dead face.

As a boy I had believed there were devils in that swamp and at the house, and I was ready to believe that they had survived their master.

But I felt no call to speak of this to Bill. Instead I nodded.

"Of course I knew Mr. Holte," I said. "Everybody about here knew him. Holte Island is less than three miles from here and he lived there for maybe forty years."

"All right. Did you ever hear that he was a miser?"

"Of course. Everybody has." All too well I knew his reputation.

"Humph!" Hobo Bill grunted disgustedly. "Maybe everybody's wondered why he wasn't ever robbed?"

"Of course. Everybody has."

"But they never found out?"

"Never."

"Well, I'll tell you why they didn't. The day after I went through here last fall—you remember—I met up with my old buddie, Jack, and he told me about Henry Holte. He said Holte had oodles of scads hid away about his place that warn't doin'

no good to nobody an' that oughter be gotten out an' circulated, instead of kept lyin' idle an' goin' finally to somebody's home or some skunk of a poor relation that never done a lick of work for it in his life. That's right, ain't it?"

"Well—er—it depends on the point of view, of course," I demurred.

Nothing loath, Bill went ahead.

"Well," he said, "Jack an' me voted yes unanimously; an' that night we went around to get Holte's gold. The doors an' windows were fast, all right; but the cellar door, which was one of them lean-to trap-door effects, wasn't fastened at all. I thought then that Holte was a fool, but afterwards I began to wonder if he hadn't left it open a-purpose."

"You mean maybe his 'devil' had," I suggested.

"Say, don't you go a-jokin' none about the devil," he protested grimly. "Whatever he was, he warn't no four-flusher. Jack went down the steps with our bug light in one hand and his automatic in the other, while I waited outside to give him the office if any one came round."

"Well?"

"It warn't well. I watched Jack till he shut off his flash right at the bottom of some steps that went up at the far end of the cellar, which meant that he saw his way clear and didn't need no more light. Listenin' all I could, I just could hear him going up the steps, an' then come a sort of gasp, an' a second later a fall. I knew 'twas Jack, an' I skipped down them near steps lively an' ran across to him. I didn't need no flash, for I'd seen that the way was pretty clear as Jack went in. Right at the bottom of the far steps I tripped over Jack. He was lyin' mighty still—bad hurt, I could tell—so I just hoisted him over my shoulder—he wasn't what you call a big man—an' as I rose I looked up the steps. God strike me dead if I didn't see, about half-way up 'em, a fiery devil dancin' on air an' grinnin' down at me.

"If I didn't drop Jack I guess it was 'cause I didn't have sense enough to. I just turned an' ran, with him across my shoulder, headin' for the starlight, till I butted

into the steps to the outside. I climbed 'em somehow an' got out an' ran till I dropped. I don't know how I'd kept on that corduroy road, but I had somehow. Jack was dead; I didn't need no flash to tell me that, an' I was dead beat. So we lay there on those bogs in the slime till mornin'. Then I looked Jack over; an', honest to God, there warn't a mark on him—not one. He'd been just plumb scared to death.

"Course I didn't dare let him lie around for somebody to find before I could get clean away an' wish it on to me. So I got two or three stones to weight him an' tipped him off the road into the water an' mud an' saw him sink. An' then I took my foot in my hand an' got away from there. An' now, hearin' that the hermit's dead and buried two months ago, I've come back to see if you'll take a fifty-fifty chance with me to go an' find that gold of his? What say?"

I did not answer for a moment. I was strongly tempted, but—well, I had reasons for hesitating.

"Look here, Bill," I said at last, "did you know that four dead men—or their skeletons—had been found within a mile of Mr. Holte's cottage in the last five years—not counting that of your buddie, and Heaven knows how many more are lying undiscovered in the swamp? None of the four showed signs of violence, though that isn't specially significant, for three of them weren't much more than skeletons. People were beginning to suspect that Mr. Holte might have had something to do with their deaths when he died himself suddenly—from old age, the doctor said."

"Old age. His own damn devil got him at last."

"Maybe. And maybe it'll get us."

Bill spat voluminously.

"Don't I know that?" he raged. "D'you ever hear of anybody gettin' devil's gold without takin' chances? Say, I thought you had spunk."

Thishipped me a little, but I let it pass. There was no use in complicating things with a quarrel.

"But what makes you so sure that Mr. Holte had any gold?" I asked Bill. I was really interested to know just what he

would say. Everybody had said that Holte must have buried money, but I had never heard anybody give a valid reason for his belief.

"Course he had money," Hobo Bill snorted. "Have some sense, man. What'd he keep a tame devil to scare honest thieves away less'n he had something he wanted to scare them away from? Course he had money—lots of it."

This was disappointing. Plainly Bill, like the rest, reasoned more or less in a circle. However, unlike the rest, he had seen the devil, or thought he had. So I pushed my queries further.

"I'm willing to be convinced," I conceded, "but the place was searched pretty thoroughly just after Mr. Holte died and only a few dollars were found."

"Of course. What was the devil there for? An' I'll bet you people did their searchin' by daylight or with lots of light?"

I nodded.

"Thought so," snorted Bill. "That ain't no way to hunt devil-guarded gold. You got to hunt that in the dark, an' you've got to be ready to fight the devil when he comes."

"But maybe this wasn't even a goblin," I objected. "I happen to know that Mr. Holte was highly trained. He was an engineer and a chemist, and he could easily have rigged up some magic lantern or moving-picture apparatus that started when somebody trod on a particular step of those stairs."

"Don't be no more of a damn fool than you c'n help," snarled Bill. "Them searchers you was tellin' about didn't find no picture machine—did they? Pass me that hooch."

I passed it, noting with satisfaction that only a few drops remained. Bill had had quite enough.

"Finish her up, Bill," I urged expansively. "I can get more the next time I go to town," I added with intention.

Bill drained the bottle dry.

"Why didn't you get more in the first place?" he growled as he set it down. "Now, come across. Are you goin' with me or not?"

I had had time to consider.

"Oh, I'll go," I said. "I believe you're right in thinking there is treasure in that cottage, and I believe it's worth taking a risk—and of course it is going to be a risk, all right. Ghost or devil or what not, there's something deadly about that place, and we go there at the peril of our lives. But—well, I need the money an' I suppose you do; so we'll go. How'll tomorrow night suit you?"

Bill frowned.

"What's the matter with tonight?" he demanded.

"It's too late; it's dark now. Besides, I've never been inside the house, and I've got to go and look over it by daylight. I don't want to run into it blindfold."

I lied, of course. I had been in the house, but I had not been in it since Bill had told of his fiery devil and that made all the difference in the world.

Bill opened his mouth to protest, but I snatched the words away from him.

"I've got to see it," I insisted. "I'm not taking any bigger chances than I've got to. That's flat."

"All right, I'll go with you."

"Not much you won't. You're a stranger; somebody'd see you, and then if anything happened, or if we found the gold, somebody'd be sure to start something. You didn't know Mr. Holte left a will giving all his property to the Home for Disabled Soldiers, or something of that sort, did you?"

"Then he did have gold?" sneered Bill between his teeth.

"His will didn't say so. He had some property in the city that the soldiers were delighted to get. They don't know anything about any gold."

"Well, I don't see any reason why you should go there."

"I do, and that settles it. If you don't want me to go gold hunting with you, all right. Go by yourself. But if you want me——"

Bill threw up the sponge.

"All right," he grumbled. "Go look over the place and be damned to you! You can't find that gold in the daytime, anyhow, even if you do get into the house."

I took no offense at the implication in Bill's words. Instead I laughed.

"Oh, I'll get in through the cellar, just as you did," I answered. "Now come along and help me get supper."

Bill hesitated, but he "came along" finally. We cooked and ate supper, talked a lot and went to bed. The next day I set out for the Holte bungalow, leaving Bill at the house with strict instructions to lock the door and let no one see him. I knew he would not do it, but I told him to, all the same.

The Holte bungalow consisted of three rooms—laboratory, living-room and kitchen—with a cement floor that served as ceiling to a cellar that stretched under the last two. I was under no illusion as to the difficulty of entering above-ground, and I tried the doors and windows chiefly as a matter of form and then went to the cellar, where I found easy access by the flimsy inclined door and steps.

At the foot of the steps I paused long enough to change my smoked goggles to my indoor ones, so as to be able to look at things more thoroughly. The cellar seemed little changed by the course of years. The same empty boxes and barrels stood against one wall, the same pile of firewood and the same axe occupied the same place on the floor, and the same steps ascended at the far end to the door that opened into the living-room on the floor above.

With Hobo Bill's experience in my mind it was easy to imagine that Holte—I refused to think of him as my uncle—had utilized the cellar as a trap for would-be robbers, and my recollections of his treatment of me left no doubt in my mind that he would be utterly ruthless in the nature of his trap. I was fair enough, however, to concede that he was justified in taking pretty radical steps to protect himself.

It remained to find the trap and to learn how it was sprung—and to do so without being caught in it.

Naturally Bill's story of the "fiery devil" and of his buddie's death gave me some sort of clue. Moreover, it suggested magic lanterns, movie projectors, or stage mirrors, with all of which and with optics in general I was more or less familiar; and

in spite of the well-remembered terrors of my youth I meant to exhaust the possibilities of these before I even considered supernatural explanations.

What really troubled me at the moment was the danger of falling into a trap that I felt must be there. I had the probable fate of the four dead men whose skeletons had been found and the certain fate of Bill's buddie to warn me that the danger was real and was well camouflaged. Of course an obvious explanation was that the men had been scared by the "devil" and had fallen down the steps and broken their necks; but this was altogether too simple and too uncertain in its workings to satisfy me. Moreover, none of the four skeletons, so far as I had ever heard, had their necks broken.

So it was with some trepidation, and a powerful flashlight to reinforce the fairly good daylight that illumined the cellar, that I studied the stairs and found them, as of old, simple and open throughout to easy inspection from all sides. Carefully I ascended them and flashed my light on every particle of the wall and landing at their top without result. Gingerly I tried the knob of the door to the upper regions, which was at the side, and not the back of the landing, and found it fast. Then I went downstairs and returned with the axe and with it smashed in the door with one good strong blow. I stood well back when I struck, not knowing what reaction it might bring.

Nothing happened, however. The crash echoed through the house, but the after stillness was so profound that I could hear my heart thump against my ribs. Obviously, either the trap mechanism was not connected with the door or the force of the blow had put it out of commission.

Entering the living-room, I searched it and the rest of the house for hidden apparatus, particularly for wires, but found no sign of them nor of any electric dynamo. As there was no commercial electric plant within twenty miles, this seemed to dispose of any possibility of the dead robbers having been electrocuted.

Finally I gave it up. If there was any mystery, if the cellar was anything more

than it seemed to be, I could find no sign of it. Perhaps Bill had lied, though this I did not believe; he had been too much in earnest. Perhaps, after all, he was right in saying that only by night could the gold be found. Certainly I had not been able to find it by day.

I closed the shattered door at the top of the steps and went reluctantly to the steps leading to the outer air.

The sun was directly overhead, glaring down with a white-hot radiance that struck my eyes like a blow and reminded me that I had not changed back to my goggles. So I put them on, and as I returned the others to my pocket I turned for a last look at the cellar whose possible mystery had balked me.

For some moments I stared; then, with sudden resolution, I went back to have one more try.

Half an hour later I came out again, closed the cellar trap-door and went away. As I went a glance out of the corner of my eyes showed me where Bill, ambushed, had been watching the house and me—as I had expected him to do.

But little I cared. Briskly I took the path through the woods for home.

When I got there I found Bill stretched on the lounge, apparently asleep. But I noticed that he was breathing faster than a sleeper should and that his forehead was moist with a perspiration not warranted by the temperature of the house. However, I did not disturb him; I merely went on to the kitchen to get lunch.

After a time he joined me.

"Well," he demanded, "what'd you find out?"

"Find out," I echoed. "What could I find out by daylight? I did what I went to do—looked over the cellar so that I wouldn't butt into anything unawares tonight. A place that's killed at least five men is worthy of that much consideration. And now that I've looked over things I'm free to admit that I'm scared. However, I'm game if you are."

"Game! Of course I'm game, damn you!" Bill snorted.

"All right. Now what's your plan of action? I guess you've framed one in all

the months you've had to think things over."

But Bill, it seemed, had no real plan except to go into the cellar just as his buddie had done and climb the steps and give the devil the first move. If I had a better plan he was perfectly willing that I should produce it.

"That's what I'm givin' you half for," he growled.

At this I grew suddenly angry.

"Look here," I burst out, "I'm tired of your bullying. I'm not in this thing for money, but for curiosity. If we find any treasure it's yours, not mine. Do you understand?"

Bill stared at me incredulously.

"You don't want your share?" he demanded.

"I haven't any share. I'm simply helping you. Now I want you to stop snarling at me. If you don't stop it I'll quit."

Bill flung back his head.

"Oh, I'll stop, all right," he promised. "Sure I will—unless you're too damn good to be true. Hold on. I didn't mean to slam you, and I don't do it any more, anyhow. Shake!" He held out his hand.

I clasped it warmly.

"It's all right," I said. "I just wanted you to understand. Now let's plan for to-night."

So we talked things over and agreed on a tentative plan that might be altered later to meet unexpected conditions.

About eleven o'clock that night we started, reached the Holte bungalow within the hour and went down into the cellar. Flashlight in hand, I led the way to a carefully selected post against the outer wall from which we could see the stairs almost to their top. There we sat ourselves down on an empty box, put out the light and resigned ourselves to wait for midnight, when any fiend of the pit might most reasonably be expected to appear.

Up to that time I had been entirely at ease. I knew there was danger in what we were doing, but I had measured it and taken such precautions as I could, and I had thought that they were adequate. Bill had been far more nervous than I.

But sitting there in the darkness I real-

ized for the first time the enormous chances I was taking. They were not merely physical chances, though knowing Holte as I did, I could not be sure that I had fathomed all his traps. Death, indiscriminating death, might be waiting to leap out at me from anywhere at any moment. But even worse were the supernatural terrors that suddenly besieged me. Once more I remembered the old man's threat to haunt me if I ran away. True, I had eventually run away and he had never haunted me. But then, until very recently, he had never been dead and therefore capable of haunting me, in the strict sense of the word, and I had never before deliberately challenged his power by intruding by night upon his premises. Who knew—

Abruptly I felt my arm clutched in a grasp that seemed to crush the flesh and the very bone. I jumped, I tried to spring to my feet, but the clutch on my arm held me down for long enough to let me realize that it was Hobo Bill's. And even in the blackness I could tell that he was leaning forward, rigid, every nerve tense, glaring up the stairs to the landing.

I forgot the crushing pressure on my arm and glared, too, glared till I saw faint luminous lines creep out on the wall at the top, gather strength and form until they merged into the shape of a fiery devil, whose mocking gaze passed over my head and whose outstretched finger pointed at me—or at something behind me.

Bill's hand fell away from my arm, and both of us, following the point of that gaze and that finger, must have turned at the same instant.

On the wall behind us was another lambent fiend, pointing downward.

Then it was my turn to grip Bill's arm, just in time to prevent him from rushing for the open air. And, simultaneously, I laughed.

"Hold on, you fool!" I cried. "They're nothing but painted devils—devils painted with phosphorus on the wall."

"What—what—what——" Bill was shaking like a leaf.

"Devils painted on the walls with phosphorus or radium paint," I repeated. "Holte must have been a wonderful artist,

We couldn't see them when we came in any more than we could have read the time on a luminous watch dial if we had looked at it then. The gleam of our flashlight was in our eyes, and we had to put it out and give our eyes time to get accustomed to the darkness—their pupils had to dilate—before we could see it. Look! These fake devils are getting stronger every moment as our eyes get better adapted. It's like going into a darkened movie theatre—for ten or fifteen minutes you can hardly see the seats."

My momentary panic had passed the moment I saw the first faint lambent lines at the head of the stairs. I was talking to calm Bill, and I was succeeding. I could feel the quivering of his nerves lessen beneath my fingers.

At last he spoke.

"So that's the way he killed Jack," he grated. "Scared him to death."

"Humph! Scarcely," I answered. "It's not as simple as that. What's this second devil pointing at?"

"The floor."

"I'm not so sure." I fumbled in the woodpile till I found a long rod. Propping it against the wall so as to indicate the tip of the devil's finger and the line of his pointing, I switched on my flash.

In the brilliant light the devil and his finger vanished, but the telltale stick remained. Our eyes, quickly recovering from the sudden brilliancy, focussed on it.

Bill, with a gasp of comprehension, bent and began to run a feverish finger along the line of the pointing, as indicated by the stick.

"Careful," I cautioned. "Don't touch anything. We haven't found what killed Jack yet."

Bill snatched his finger from the wall, but he did not withdraw the gaze of his eager eyes. An instant later he uttered a cry.

"Look!" he gasped, pointing to a spot close to the floor. "Ain't that a push-button. It looks——"

"It looks damnably like it," I gasped, too. "Hold on, don't press it with your finger. Here—use this."

He took the piece of wood I offered and pressed with it, then abruptly snatched it away.

"Something struck it," he cried. "Good God!" He held the wood up for me to see.

Deeply driven into the soft fiber was the broken end of a needle. I looked at it.

"Hollow," I said. "Chances are it was poisoned. That's what killed Jack, and God knows how many others. Press again in the same spot."

Bill pressed again, harder, and two bricks, or rather two brick "faces," swung outward, revealing a recess about a foot deep, piled at the back with tightly tied packets of banknotes, in front of which lay a few silver coins. On top of these was a folded sheet of paper, obviously a note.

Bill snatched it up.

"By God!" he cried, "if it ain't a note from old Holte. He says: 'Mr. Burglar: If you've had spunk enough and wit enough to get this far you're entitled to your reward. Take it. Henry Holte.' Ha, ha! Old Hen had sportin' blood, if you ask me."

Bill thrust his hand into the cavity and raked the packets of banknotes out to the floor. Then he caught up one and started to tear it open.

But I caught his arm.

"Careful, you fool!" I cried. "Don't trust him. There may be another needle."

Like a fury Bill dropped the packet and swung around upon me. His revolver glittered as he jerked it from his pocket.

"Hands up!" he snarled. "Quick!"

I put them up.

"What's the matter, Bill?" I asked finally. "The money's all yours. I told you I didn't want it."

"Damn lucky for you you did. If you hadn't——" He paused. "But I ain't trusting you. You got something working behind them sneaky eyes of your'n." He reached up and snatched the flashlight from my hand. "Turn round an' walk to that wall behind you an' poke your nose against it and keep it there," he commanded.

I obeyed, of course. And I kept both nose and eyes as directed. But I heard the banknotes rustle as Bill gathered them up and thrust them into his pocket, with no interval of delay for examination. Then:

"Listen, you!" he rasped. "I'd ought to kill you and sink you down a-top of Jack. But you'd go to jail with me if you talked, an' I'm goin' to take a chance an' leave you be. If you was tellin' the truth about not wantin' none of this money you won't mind my takin' it all, an' if you was lyin' you'd ought to be punished for it. You stay where you are for ten minutes an' then go along home and forget about to-night. See?"

Bill ended, and the changing shadows showed that he was moving with the flashlight toward the outdoor steps and trap-door. The light went out, and from the corner of my eye I saw his silhouette against the moon-lit sky. Then with a "So-long, old man," he was gone.

I waited the full ten minutes. I had no desire to follow Bill. Then I went home, where I am writing this chronicle.

I have been writing for hours. My lamp is burning very low, and the gray dawn is creeping in through the slits of my shutters.

In a shallow box on the table before me are the contents of Holte's secret safe—thousands of dollars in notes of large denominations. I brought them home with me yesterday—or, no, it is day before yesterday now—and left in their place the tightly corded packets—packets of brown paper with a single dollar bill at top and bottom—that Bill had carried off. That is why I did not want him to examine them on the spot and why I had no wish to follow him.

How did I find Holte's safe? Easily enough, when once I got the clue. All I told Bill about phosphorus and radium paint and wanting to wait in the dark for the pupils of one's eyes to expand in order to see the light from them was true. But it was not all the truth! I did not tell him that smoked glasses, set in goggles, such as I wore, gave an imitation darkness that ex-

panded the pupils of the eye and enabled me to see phosphorescence by day—dimly, but with sufficient accuracy. Years ago I had rooked many a boob at poker by wearing smoked glasses and using cards marked on their backs with phosphorus.

With my goggles on I saw the "devils," both of them, found and opened the recess and arranged it for Bill's entertainment.

The poisoned needle was no invention of mine; it had been there from the first, and it had come near stabbing me. The note from Holte was there, too, and I left it for Bill.

Why did I go back with Bill? Why did I not make my escape with the money? Simple enough. Like Holte, I had some sporting blood. I liked to take a chance and give the other fellow a chance. It's been a long time since I matched myself against another in a battle of wits, and the fight was like wine to me; it has set new blood tingling in my veins and has shown me that I have not lost my early skill. It is worth more than money to me.

Bill perhaps already has found out the value of his booty. But he will credit Holte with having placed the brown paper where we found it. Probably he will never come back here; and if he does it will not be for months—not until long after I have sold my place and gone away forever.

It is all over. Bill has come back. He has just shot me through the shutters. Afterward he taunted me with having betrayed myself by filling those packets with brown paper slips cut from a sheet of wrapping paper that bore a label with my name and address. So I was not so clever as I thought. Bill wins! Yet he will not win altogether. I hear him battering in the shutters. But he will be too late. I have crawled to the kitchen, dragging the box of banknotes, and am feeding them to the fire. They are nearly gone, and I am nearly gone. I will not live long enough to witness Bill's chagrin. Now to hide this story. I cannot move. I will tuck it under my body. Bill will not look there! But others will—later—and—

The Devil's Blood Pearl

By ARTHUR SEYMOUR WITT

RICHARD HARROW, manager of "The Argus Detective Agency," was sure of several things. He knew that "Wizard" Rogers, an ex-stool-pigeon, whom he had sent to recover a gem known as the Devil's Blood Pearl, had got hold of it in Mexico City. Rogers had wired this news to the agency's headquarters at San Francisco as soon as the trick was turned.

Chief Harrow also knew that a certain syndicate of international gem thieves, the very clique that the "Wizard" had out-generaled, would go to any extreme to get the priceless pearl back into its possession. Besides, a half-dozen other detective agencies were after it. For to recover the black pearl was not only to win a small fortune by way of reward, but also world-wide prestige.

And it had been for these reasons that Harrow lost no time getting in on the ground floor as soon as the news of the pearl's loss was broadcast by the press.

He had called in "Wizard" Rogers, a reformed gem thief of uncanny talents, and explained the whole matter to him.

The ex-stool-pigeon had spoken right out:

"I'll land that pearl or bust," he promised. "I know your lay, Chief. You want it mostly for the rep. it will bring you, and to get that rep. you want to work the thing without any help from the police."

"Right," said the Chief.

And so Rogers was soon on his way.

But things had not gone so well after the first great piece of news—that "Wizard" had the jewel. Since then Harrow had heard nothing more from him. A week passed; still nothing. Something must have gone woefully awry, thought the Chief. Rogers should have gotten back

to San Francisco at least a week after he wired. No wonder Harrow was a bit worried.

Yet he didn't lose faith in his man. The reformed ex-stool was one of his kind in a million. He stood squarely on his record to become respectable. He had reached the head of his class by actually doing things—producing the real goods. He was a clever and unfailing worker and had yet to make his first blunder. His methods were unique. He was daring to an alarming degree, and seemed to revel in the sensational.

It was he, for instance, who, after the loss of the world-famed Vail diamonds, had gone single-handed into the underworld, posing as a gangster, and finally succeeded in bringing them to the police.

In fact, it was shortly after this marvellous piece of work that he was engaged by the Argus people, and he soon proved himself a real asset on their staff.

The first week after he was engaged he lifted a valuable string of pearls from a society burglar less than a half-hour after the burglar stole them, and had them returned to the owner before that person knew of his loss.

And so he was finally sent after the famous Devil's Blood Pearl. That priceless heirloom had been stolen from the safe of its owner in Pasadena. The "Wizard" traced it to Mexico City. Then the news came that he had it in his possession, and that he was on his way back with it.

But another week passed, two, three. Still not a word from the agency's clever emissary. He should have been back a month ago. Something serious must have happened to him. Chief Harrow was now thoroughly alarmed.

But one day during the fifth week a man

shambled into the Chief's private office. Harrow had to look at him twice before he recognized the man. Then he literally shot from his seat.

"Wizard!" he cried in joyful surprise. "You, of all men."

But an instant after greeting the clever operative a grave fear took possession of him. True, it was the "Wizard," but what a different man from the one who had left for Mexico City several weeks before! He had gone on his reckless mission a dapper, dashing, devil-may-care young fellow, cocky and confident. But now all of the old spirit was wrung from him, and he was a pitiful sight indeed. As he walked he dragged his feet like a man ninety years old. The Chief was astounded as he assisted him to a chair, with undisguised misgivings pictured on his face.

"What's the trouble, old man?"

The weary sleuth settled heavily into the chair without a word. To the first-hand question of his chief he gave no answer; he simply stared about. The Chief was now thoroughly alarmed. The man looked broken in health and spirit—altogether down and out. His skin was gray, his cheeks hollow, black rings circled his sunken eyes. Everything seemed to point to grinding days and sleepless nights.

But in another moment Harrow's mind had taken a new tack; now the matter of the Devil's Blood Pearl came back to him. Instantly it overshadowed everything else.

"Well, how did you make out?" he asked, as businesslike as possible.

The other sighed heavily, his eyes half-closed, looking at the floor.

"Well?"

"Wizard" raised his head a bit.

"I got the pearl, all right, but the Mexican police camped on my trail an hour later. And they stuck, believe me, they stuck. They're some spotters, those damned greasers. I couldn't give them the slip. I was in a terrible fix."

He spoke listlessly and with an effort.

"They almost tripped me a dozen times, but I always slipped through their net. Of course, I could have told them who I was, but I didn't want them in on the case at all. Your orders, Chief. For a week I tried to

worm my way out of Mexico City, but I couldn't make it. I had all I could do to keep out of the hands of those greasers."

He was more like himself now, thanks to a glass of brandy that Harrow had given him.

"I had to fight it out with six of them one evening, and I must have drilled a few. I emptied my gun, and then started with a knife, and how I ever escaped is more than I can explain, but I did."

The ex-stool here smiled quietly at the recollection.

"Then I had to take to disguises. This threw the police off and allowed me time to get my breath. But I really jumped from the frying-pan into the fire, for the next day a bunch of the cutthroats that I nabbed the pearl from got my number and knocked me cold. They dragged me into a stinking hole of theirs, and I thought I was done for.

"We won't keep you long," said the leader, grinning like an ape. 'Where's the jewel?'

"I laughed in his face—told him I didn't know what he was jabbering about, and all that. Then he told me to take all my clothes off. I told them to go to blazes; so they stripped me themselves and then kicked me, naked, into a corner of the room. They went through my clothes. Then they opened my mouth and looked under my tongue, poked about in my ears and mussed up my hair, but they didn't find a thing. After a long search they finally decided that there was no pearl anywhere on my body, so they started again on my clothes. Piece by piece they went all over them; they pulled all the padding out; they knocked the heels off my shoes; they tore my cap to pieces. They even smashed my watch to see what was inside."

Harrow was still listening intently.

"Then they starved and tortured me for three weeks, trying to get me to tell them where the pearl could be found. But it didn't do them any good. Finally they found out where my room was. After tearing everything to pieces there, they let me go. I guess they thought they had made a mistake, after all."

Here the narrator stopped and smiled strangely.

"Well, it's too bad, Wizard," Harrow said dejectedly. He was greatly disappointed. His best man had fallen down, when he was solely relied upon to make a name for the agency. Then, exasperated, he turned almost fiercely upon his subordinate.

"But why did you let it get away from you? You shouldn't have left it in your room. You knew I picked you as the one best bet I had. But you pulled a boner somewhere. Either the greaser police or the gang who stole it in the first place has the pearl now."

The "Wizard's" reply was like a snap of a whip. He suddenly straightened in his chair.

"How do you get that way, Chief? Pull a boner? Who's been telling you I haven't got the pearl? I'm not altogether daffy, I hope."

"But—er—"

The ex-stool's manner took another change. He looked at his Chief with a whimsical expression on his sharp countenance.

"Did I ever tell you that years ago I met with a serious accident? Well, I did," he went on without waiting for an answer. "I got mixed up in a stabbing affair; was pretty well cut up, too. He smiled as he pointed to an ugly scar that ran down his face from eye to chin.

"But what of that?" said Harrow impatiently.

"And I also lost an eye."

The Chief leaped to his feet.

"Ancient history," he said sarcastically. "Your stabbing affair and lost eye be hanged. What has that got to do with losing the famous pearl, you idiot?"

But the Wizard only smiled.

"The Devil's Blood Pearl, as you know," he went on, "is a blue-black stone, the only one of its kind—that's why it's so valuable. And it's round and about the size of a marble," he explained, still smiling tantalizingly. "Of course, all this has really nothing to do with the stabbing affair of ten years ago, but don't forget what I said about losing an eye, Chief. And if you'll take the trouble to notice my eyes are black as the devil."

The Chief gasped; then he stared in wonder at the man before him.

"By God! Do you mean——"

"I mean that I went to an expert on artificial eyes in Mexico City that day when they let up on me a bit and had the old fellow make a new eye for me."

But the ex-stool-pigeon did not say anything more. He acted. Reaching up, he removed the glasses he wore. Two perfectly matched eyes greeted the look of the Chief. But the next moment the "Wizard," with a peculiar movement, snatched the right eye from its socket and extended it toward Harrow, whose mouth was now agape with amazement.

The famous Devil's Blood Pearl, with a painted retina and neatly set in a surrounding of white, lay in the "Wizard's" palm.

SAWS FOUR BARS TO ESCAPE

SAWING through four iron bars, William Stein, twenty-seven, of Corona, escaped from the fifth floor of West Side Prison recently. There was no sign of a rope and the nearest roof was forty feet from the window. Police from West 49th Street Station surrounded the block but found no trace of Stein. A woman who said she was Mrs. K. Stein of No. 315 West 36th street visited him.

The police are trying to find this person.

Stein was arrested May 1 after, it is charged, he posed as a policeman and tried to cash a "pay check" in a Broadway delicatessen store near 88th street. Police allege he cashed other checks, signing the name John J. Lyons, and that when arrested he had blank checks, a rubber stamp reading "Police Department," a badge and a tin pistol in a holster.

Trapped By Microphone

By DR. HARRY ENTON

"GOOD-AFTERNOON, Maitland," said the Chief of the Secret service, as a tall man of middle age walked into the New York office. "If you had been much longer I would have been close to nervous prostration, for there is a matter on hand that is extremely important. And, my friend, there is nobody else to whom I could entrust it with any degree of confidence. Sit down and I'll give you details. By the way, have you ever had anything to do with 'Hands Up' Morgan and his side partner, 'Smooth' Tracy?"

"I have not, but I've heard they are two of the coolest and most dangerous gunmen in the country."

"That is correct. So far as you know, however, have they ever seen you?"

"I feel sure that they have not."

"That is a valuable point in my plans, for they are desperate men and would kill you without hesitation if they thought you were likely to interfere with their work. One of the force caught sight of the precious pair alighting from the Canadian Limited when the train rolled into Grand Central depot this morning and trailed them until they entered a residence which he was familiar with. He immediately telephoned the news to me, knowing that it was of the utmost importance that I should learn why these two gunmen came East. Now, while I am working out a plan to nab them you read this report. It contains the findings of three of the most competent investigators attached to our office, extending over a period of six months."

He handed a typewritten sheet to Maitland, and the latter read it.

"COMBINED REPORT ON FRANK FARRINGTON

"Farrington is a handsome, portly man of middle age and imposing presence. His evi-

dent culture and intellectual gifts make a marked impression on all with whom he comes in contact. He is supposed to be a wealthy member of the British aristocracy, a man of wealth, living in a small but handsome residence in bachelor style. He keeps a Japanese valet, a chauffeur, a French chef, a laundress, butler and two maids. He is regarded as an expert in matters of art, and has many fine paintings and valuable vases, as well as a large collection of rare coins and postage stamps. Farrington is a member of numismatical and philatelic societies, his judgment being frequently sought by coin and stamp 'bugs.' In addition he is also a clever musician, and his bass voice, which has rather a rumbling quality in conversation, has all the melody of an organ when he sings. The servants all appear to be perfectly proper people. Finally, there does not seem to be any women in his life, and in addition to his artistic and faddish indulgences his sole pleasure seems to be taken out in semi-annual trips to Europe."

Maitland laid the report on the desk before the Chief and regarded the latter with an inquiring expression on his face.

"Well," spoke up his superior officer, "what do you have to say about this Frank Farrington?"

"He seems to be a cultivated and distinguished gentleman with artistic and also faddish ideas and, if the report is to be believed, he possesses a fascinating personality."

"In short," rejoined the other, with a twinkle in his eyes, "the kind of man whom you would feel privileged to introduce into your family circle, isn't he?"

"Yes, if this report is to be given full credit," was Maitland's guarded reply.

"Oh, you can give full credit to the report."

"Then," asked Maitland, "what is the answer? That report wouldn't be in this office unless Farrington was under suspicion."

"Right, Maitland, and the answer is that Frank Farrington, who is all that this report makes him out to be, is really 'False Front' Finlay, one of the most dangerous criminals in the country. He is a brainy schemer who has been a thorn in the side of the department for years, and has slipped out of every net that has been spread for him. The man has accumulated at least a million dollars. His wealth has enabled him to bribe a number of underpaid employees in the national capital. We have learned that they have violated the departmental rules concerning the shipments of both banknotes and specie that come through one of the two customary channels. Finlay has stuck to one individual line of work, which consists of gathering in these shipments to the various banks. You will understand the impotence of the situation when I inform you that Morgan and Tracy are two of the gunmen we think he employs to carry out hold-ups when he gets information from his spies in Washington. These two gunmen were trailed by my men today to this arch criminal's house. We have no real evidence yet or we'd nail Finlay. It is my impression he has received information of specie shipment, and is preparing to make another haul. I want you to make an effort to block his scheme and, possibly, capture him with the goods. If you can do either of these things it will be the biggest kind of a feather in your cap, and may lead to speedy promotion. Get on the job without delay and do your best. Of course you and I know that what is known as luck, or chance, has frequently much to do with success or failure. But an experienced and talented officer, which describes Thomas Maitland, may succeed where many have failed. Brown and King are the lads who spotted and trailed these two gunmen, and they will give you whatever information they have picked up. Communicate whatever you're able to learn. Success to you!"

He extended his hand to his favorite officer. Maitland shook it heartily and then

passed from the office as nonchalantly as though going forth on an errand of the most casual character.

In the outer office he met Brown and King, had a brief conversation with the two trailers, and then went on his way.

Later that afternoon Gaines, the butler of the Farrington establishment, left the house, and at the same moment a middle-aged man came out of the basement door of a house across the way, crossed the street, calling out as he did so:

"Oh, I say, Mr. Gaines! Just a moment, please."

Gaines came to a halt and looked approvingly at the English-cut clothing and the equally English "mutton-chop" whiskers of the man who was approaching him.

"Pawdon me for stopping you in the street," said the stranger, who spoke with an unmistakable English accent, "but we are both in the same line, and I've 'eard of you through the gossip of the servants. I was anxious to make your acquaintance. My name is Thomas Fishwick, and I am butler for the Stimson family across the way."

They shook hands, and Fishwick continued with a knowing wink: "I am very fond of good Scotch, and I've found a place near at 'and where we can get a ball. Will you join me, Mr. Gaines?"

"With pleasure," promptly said the other, and a moment later the two had passed around the corner, chatting amiably, Fishwick exhibiting an occasional contempt in the matter of aspirates.

"From London, Mr. Fishwick?" inquired Gaines, secretly envying his companion his dignified bearing and his Cockney accent.

"Yes, within the year," was the response, "and never in service on this side before, but always with the British aristocracy. Here we are."

They entered an alleged soft drink saloon, which conspicuously displayed many signs asserting that nothing intoxicating was sold on the premises. The British butler whispered something to the man behind the bar, a door at the rear of the room mysteriously opened, and Fishwick conducted Gaines into a small room containing some tables and chairs. A moment later they

were served with two glasses, a chilled syphon and a bottle of Scotch whisky.

They poured out their drinks, put in the cold carbonic, and then Gaines held up his glass with an appreciative smile.

"To our better acquaintance, Mr. Fishwick," he said, and raised the glass towards his lips. But it never reached there, but wavered uncertainly in the man's shaking hand, and finally crashed to the floor when Fishwick quietly responded:

"Oh, we're going to become much better acquainted, you may be positive about that, Joe Garrett!"

The Farrington butler grew deadly pale and looked at his companion with alarm and curiosity, every muscle in his face working nervously.

"Who are you?" he whispered in hoarse tones.

"That is not at all important," was the quiet reply "but *what* I am makes all the difference imaginable to you, Garrett. Look here!"

He inserted his thumb beneath his right suspender and drew it forth so that the glittering badge of the United States Secret Service was brought plainly into view. When Gaines caught sight of it he shivered for a moment, and then, with an effort, pulled himself together.

"That's all right, I see what you are," he admitted, "but there has been 'nothing on' me for some years. I've been living a perfectly straight life, so what is it to me what you are?"

"Oh, so you've been living a perfectly straight life for years, have you?" was the quiet query of the detective.

"Yes, I have," defiantly.

"Then, Garrett, why were you in court when Big Corey's gang of counterfeiters stood at the bar of justice in Buffalo less than a year ago, where, like the rest of the gang, you pleaded not guilty and were placed under bail? Unlike the rest of the gang, you were able to square your bail-bond and leave the city on the first dark night. Eh, Garrett, answer me that."

Gaines flushed and shifted uneasily under the sarcastic gaze of the low-voiced detective. He finally lowered his head and did some rapid thinking, then he glanced

swiftly towards the door though which they had so recently entered. It was evident that he was meditating flight, but the detective speedily put that idea out of his mind.

"I've got two men outside," he hinted, "and you would be nabbed the moment you beat it."

Gaines muttered a curse, and then seemed to make up his mind as to the best course to be pursued.

"What do you want?" he asked.

Before answering any questions the detective walked to the door communicating with the bar and returned with another glass and two cigars. With ill grace the Farrington butler mixed another highball and then both lit their cigars. Finally the detective turned to Gaines and said:

"Your master entertains two different kinds of guests on different evenings in his home, doesn't he?"

"Yes, sometimes artistic nuts, or stamp or coin guys, and sometimes chaps that I've put down as mighty knowing mugs."

"Exactly. Now, when is the next affair of Farrington's scheduled to come off?"

"Tomorrow evening the master gives a supper to four coin collectors."

"Very well. Where does he entertain these gentlemen?"

"In the breakfast room, because it's more cozy."

"And the intellectual gents?"

"Always in the library."

"Always? You're sure?"

"Yes, I think that it's because they want to talk about very private matters, for about ten o'clock the master tells me that I can go to bed, and that gave me the idea that the talk was not for my ears."

"Now, Joe, where is your wife?"

The crook glared at his questioner, and an ugly expression came to his face. He put his hand to a rear pocket as though to draw a weapon, but the detective grinned at him in such disdain that he let his hand fall. Then he burst out:

"You leave her out of the matter! She is an honest woman, and doesn't even know that she's married to a crook."

"I have nothing against the lady," soothingly rejoined the detective, "and merely want to know where she is."

"She's in Buffalo, where I had to leave her when I skipped my bail bond. I've not been back there, nor have I seen her since. You'll probably grin at the statement that my marriage was a love match, because you guys don't think we are human. All the same it's the truth."

"Excellent!" said the detective, "and it will be good news to you to hear that you are going to see your wife very soon. Now listen very attentively, for this is what you are going to do, if you choose to follow instructions instead of going back to Buffalo and getting a sentence that will not be any shorter because you skipped your bail."

Then, for a few minutes the detective spoke in a low tone of voice, while his thoroughly cowed auditor listened intently. At the conclusion of the murmured words the butler nodded in silence.

"Is it clear?" asked the detective.

"Perfectly."

"And you'll do it?"

"I've got to," admitted the other, "but it'll all come out some day, and then I'll meet up with a pistol or a knife. Such guys as these crooks are not going to let me get away with it without trying to get square."

"If my plans work out as I think they will, Joe," quietly said the detective, "you are likely to die of old age before any of these chaps see the outside of whatever jails they're going to, so don't worry about that."

"It's a relief to hear you say it," said Gaines, "and you can depend upon me to do everything just as you have laid it out. Can I go now?"

"Certainly, and I'll walk out with you, to save you from the annoyance of a couple of my men who would grab you first, and you'll have nothing to regret, but any treachery is going to land you in the cooler, and then you'll disappear for twenty years."

"I'll deliver the goods," asserted Gaines, and then they left the saloon.

Two men at either end of the block slipped into the shadows of convenient doorways as they reached the pavement.

"Don't forget," said the detective warningly, and they parted company.

The following morning Mr. Farrington

got out of bed at ten o'clock, walked into the bathroom, completed his ablutions, then donned a silk dressing-gown and submitted himself to the skillful hands of his Japanese valet, who shaved and dressed him. The Jap then brought up a breakfast of fragrant coffee and crisp rolls, which was leisurely eaten while the morning paper was being perused. Then Farrington lit a long and thick cigar and started downstairs for the library, his favorite lounging place. He was halfway down the stairs when the doorbell rang, and he watched with idle curiosity as Gaines arose from his seat in the hallway, opened the door to a telegraph messenger, and signed for the message.

"For me, Gaines?" asked Farrington.

"No, sir; for me."

"Better open it at once, then," suggested Farrington, "because telegrams are usually important."

"Thank you, sir; very kind of you, sir," said Gaines, and he forthwith opened the envelope, glanced at the telegram, gasped like a fish out of water, shook so that the paper in his hand fairly rattled, and then staggered backward and dropped heavily into his accustomed chair.

With a sympathetic expression on his face Farrington walked hastily forward and laid his hand kindly on the butler's shoulder.

"Very bad news, Joe?" he asked in kind tones.

The butler handed over the telegram, which was dated from Buffalo that very morning. The message read:

"Wife run over by automobile. In hospital; uncertain live or not. Better come at once."

Gaines mopped his eyes, while his employer read the message again, and the butler looked up imploringly. Farrington understood the mute appeal.

"Of course you must go, Gaines," he said reflectively; "but it is unfortunate for me, because this evening, as you know, I am to entertain some very celebrated and distinguished coin collectors."

"Oh, as to that, sir," eagerly broke in the butler, "you needn't worry for a moment.

My cousin, Thomas Fishwick, a most experienced man, who has served some of the finest families on the other side, is temporarily out of a place. He means to take a vacation, but I'm sure that he'll fill in for me for the few days that I shall be gone. I can notify him on my way to the train, and he'll be here within the hour. I know you'll be more than pleased with him."

Farrington hurried the man away, and within an hour was talking to the very high-class servant who arrived with a satchel and introduced himself as Thomas Fishwick. The master of the house turned the substitute butler over to the valet, who introduced him to the rest of the servants, and then conducted him to Gaines's room on the top floor. There the new butler locked the door, drew forth from his bag a coil of wire, unscrewed a bulb from the left-hand socket of the pair of electric lights and screwed in a connection at one end of the wire. He then attached a small electric drill to the other end, turned on the current, and quickly drilled a hole into the empty socket. Then he attached a platinum wire to the drill, again turned on the current, and when the wire glowed white-hot he thrust it into the hole he had bored, and at once there issued a little stream of smoke and a peculiar odor.

"That's the right odor; proves that the insulation is burned away and that the contact is assured," muttered the new butler. Then he put the instruments back in the bag, donned a sober-looking suit of plum-colored cloth and walked downstairs to the library to receive his orders. The instructions for that evening's affair were given, Fishwick standing stiffly at attention and fixing his eyes at a point exactly eighteen inches over Farrington's head, noting the construction of the library's electric chandelier.

Farrington said that he was going out for a walk, and Fishwick requested that on his return he might be permitted to go out and purchase a special powder for the cut-glass, which he claimed bestowed a crystalline polish.

"Certainly, Fishwick," graciously assented the gratified master, "go out and get

anything you require, and charge it to household expense account."

"Thank you very much, sir, and I 'ope I'll please you in every way, sir."

And after Farrington had left the library, approvingly noting that Fishwick was making a more effective and pleasing arrangement of the fine cut-glass on the sideboard, the new butler closely inspected the ornamental hammered brass sphere that formed the under termination of the handsome electric chandelier. He reached up and gave the ball a tentative twist that assured him that it unscrewed, and then took a pair of calipers from his pocket and measured the greatest circumference of the ball.

"Just what I thought," he muttered; "that simplifies one part of the work."

On Farrington's return Fishwick left the house for half an hour and returned with a small package in his hand. Farrington was enjoying his afternoon sleep, and the new butler proceeded to the library, where he hastily unscrewed the brass ornament from the bottom of the chandelier and hid it in a far corner of the sideboard. He then opened his package and disclosed a duplicate hammered brass ball. This duplicate, as he held it upside-down for inspection, showed a "pepperbox" perforation such as dealers punch into a newly purchased hat when a customer requires ventilation. These perforations were very much finer, although more numerous, and were invisible to the unassisted eye except at close range. Then Fishwick produced from the package a small microphone, and after carefully lowering the delicate instrument into the hollow brass ball, he set it down while he inserted his slender fingers into the gaping opening at the bottom of the chandelier, found some wires, produced a file and skillfully scraped away considerable insulation, and then picked up the microphone.

But now he grasped the protruding wires of the microphone with one hand and carefully introduced the compressed bunch up into the gaping opening, knowing that when he released them and screwed in the ornamental bulb, which he at once did, that the

released wires would make contact with the denuded service wires at a number of points. He finally took a small tube from the package, expressed some of the paste contents on the cut-glass ware, and with linen, chamois, silken remnants and that unpatented commodity known as "elbow grease," he succeeded in imparting a superlative luster to the glassware.

That evening the prosperous-looking gentlemen who arrived in luxurious limosines and were royally dined and wined by the master of the house cast more than one appreciative glance at the deft-handed and silent-moving butler, who seemed to anticipate their every need and to supply it with the perfection of noiseless dexterity.

When the guests had gone Farrington turned to the butler approvingly and said: "Fishwick, you are a perfect jewel, and I shall regret the day when your cousin's return terminates your remarkable service."

"Very good, sir; thank you, sir," mumbled Fishwick. Shortly after Farrington told him that he might go to bed, and with humble thanks the butler retired to his room.

The following evening three very different sort of men made a call and were ushered into the library. They were well-dressed and well-behaved, but there was something furtive about the expression in the eyes of all three, and Fishwick, with his eighteen inches of elevated stare, was at once satisfied as to the character of the trio. They drank their host's wines and liquors and smoked his fragrant cigars, and chatted amiably with him about stocks, bonds and investments in local real estate, but the marble-faced Fishwick was not fooled by all this talk. Ten o'clock chimed from the ormolu timepiece in the room.

"I shall not need you any more tonight, Fishwick," announced Farrington, and with mumbled thanks the butler retired to his room. There he locked his door, took from his vest pocket an old-fashioned silver watch of the "turnip" variety, seized the crown at the top of the stem, pulled strongly, detached the crown from the stem and at once brought into view a

dangling length of fine wire which had been snugly coiled in the hollow crown. One end of the wire was thrust into the small hole which Fishwick had bored into the left-hand socket the previous day. Then the butler drew from his pockets two small dry batteries, which he attached by means of fine wires and binding screws to two small posts that showed at the top of the stem. He then turned the watch over in his hand, disclosing the fact that the back case was perforated with a score of small holes. Sitting down at the dressing-case, the butler held the peculiar-looking watch to his left ear and a gratified grin overspread his face.

"Fine," he said. "As clear as the proverbial bell."

Then he got a writing-pad and placed it on the dressing-case, grasped a sharp-pointed pencil and proceeded to cover the paper with shorthand notes for the next half-hour. Finally, with an exclamation of satisfaction he took the odd microphone detector from his left ear, closely inspected his stenographic notes, undressed and went to bed.

The Southside National Bank had been open for about an hour the following morning when a wire-screened parcels post auto drove up in front of the institution, a guard armed with a sawed-off shotgun in his hands sitting on the seat beside the man who drove it. As it came to a stop three men who had for fifteen minutes past been looking up at the roofs of the houses opposite, making marks on a large sheet of paper and conferring together about something in very earnest style, dropped the sheet of paper in the street and went into action. The driver of the auto climbed down from his seat.

He held in his hand a large but evidently light package, and had taken one step towards the bank when the three men simultaneously drew revolvers from their hip pockets, one swiftly covered the post-office messenger, another pointed his gun at the armed guard and together they shouted:

"Hands up!"

The third man held his weapon low, and glanced alternately up and down the street. The messenger dropped the bundle, and

hastily held his hands high above his head. The armed guard hesitated for the merest fraction of a second, and then permitted the shotgun to drop between his knees, while his hands jerked into the air with a spasmodic motion.

Half a dozen doors below the bank a man lounged against the counter of a cigar store, puffing at a butt. Across the way another man stood faintly visible in the shadows of a deep entrance. This man now ran into the street and blew two shrill blasts on a whistle. Outside the cigar store stood a taxi, with its motor slowly running, the driver leaning idly over the wheel and puffing at a cigarette. The instant the double whistle rang out the man in the cigar store threw down his cigar, bolted from the place, drawing a pistol as he went, ran across the sidewalk to the taxi, leaped in beside the driver and jammed his gun against the fellow's ribs, at the same time growling:

"Shut off your motor."

At the side of the cigar store there was an alley, and out from this alley now sped a motorcycle with one policeman at the handle-bar and another sitting in the carrier, a gun in his hand. As soon as the machine reached the sidewalk the driver turned sharply towards the bank and ran swiftly in that direction, his shrill horn tooting a succession of piercing blasts which made pedestrians scatter in haste. Straight for the holdup scene the driver of the motorcycle sped, the horn constantly shrieking its shrill warning. A moment later the officer in the carrier fired two shots into the air. All this noise and confusion was entirely too much for the cool poise of the three holdup men, one of whom had bent down to clutch the abandoned package, while the other two kept the messenger and the guard covered.

They all three turned their heads to see what sort of shrieking, shooting monster was bearing down on them. Instantly the guard in the mail auto clutched and leveled his shotgun, pressed the trigger and shot one bandit in the leg. He then fired another shot, and then the third robber, who had seized the bundle, dropped it hastily and threw his two hands high above his

head. At that instant the motorcycle came to a sudden stop. The policeman in the carrier leaped out and escorted the messenger with the package into the bank, while the man who had jammed his gun against the ribs of the taxi driver compelled him to drive up outside the bank. There the two wounded robbers and the other were bundled into the vehicle, the policeman who had been riding in the motorcycle carrier got in with them and the taxi was driven away.

Inside the bank, Frank Farrington was transacting some business at the cashier's window, when the man who had blown the whistle tapped him on the arm, and he wheeled around to meet the quiet gaze of his temporary butler.

"Anything wrong, Fishwick?" he anxiously inquired.

"Well, this job went wrong," was the reply, as the speaker drew forth his suspender and exhibited his badge, "so, Finlay, you'll have to come along with me."

The surprise was so complete that it stunned the fellow, and his dignified manner dropped from him as a snake sheds its skin. As he realized the facts of the situation his eyes blazed and he made a motion towards his hip pocket, but his wrist was seized in a sinewy grip and his captor quietly said:

"It's no use, Finlay. Even if you could kill me, my men would get you the instant you stepped outside the door. Then you would go to the electric chair instead of a jail. You've been swimming in the sea of crime for a long time, but you are hooked at last."

Late that same day the head of the local branch of the United States Secret Service extended a congratulatory hand to Maitland.

"Great!" he said, "and now tell me how you did it."

"Why, it was not at all a difficult case," modestly said Maitland, "for after I had got into the house as a butler to take the place of Joe Garrett I found it easy to put a microphone in the library where Finlay laid out his plan of operations with his gunmen. This big silver watch of mine, which really has an extremely thin movement at the

front, is so constructed that with the addition of two dry cells to magnify sounds it is possible to hear a fly walk across the ceiling. Now, Finlay and his gunmen were cautious during their talk, and conversed in whispers, but every word that they uttered came clearly to me through the detector, and was at once jotted down in shorthand on a pad and later on written out in long-hand and sent to you. That was how the trick was turned. Any later news?"

"Yes, the two gunmen, wounded and in danger of death from blood poisoning, turned on Finlay and have made a clean

breast of all they know about this and some other jobs. When this super criminal gets his sentence it will not be for less than forty years. It was the greatest piece of work ever done by any man connected with this office. When the official comments on my report come here from Washington you will have to wear a veil to hide your blushes."

"However," quietly observed Maitland, as he lit a cigar and blew the fragrant smoke through his nostrils, "such things, although they may be somewhat unusual in character, are all in the day's work."

QUEEN OF THE UNDERWORLD

DID Sophie Lyons, who for many years was an international criminal and for forty years more an honorable business woman; die at the hands of the underworld in which she was once the ruling queen?

The question suggested itself a few minutes after Mrs. Sophie Lyons Burke died in Grace Hospital of cerebral hemorrhage in Detroit.

It was learned that three holdup men whom she had befriended and tried to reform and whose names she always held inviolate had threatened to "get" her after accusing her of "squealing to the police." And it was learned, too, that just before Mrs. Burke—to use the name by which she was known among her neighbors—collapsed in her home recently, she was alone in her room with three men who went there on the pretext of renting a property.

Mrs. Burke was heard to cry, "Quint; don't do it," before she lapsed into unconsciousness and was shortly after taken to the hospital.

"'Once a thief, always a thief,' is the blackest lie ever hatched," has been the slogan of Mrs. Burke, or Sophie Lyons, since the day of her reformation. Practically all of her fortune of about \$1,000,000 was amassed through real estate deals in Detroit. In recent years she has spent much

of her momey and time in aiding criminals to reform.

Mrs. Burke was born in New York, where, at the age of six, she was taught by her stepmother to pick pockets. Schooled at home, she learned every trick of the thief's trade before she was ten. Through England, France, Italy, Germany and Russia she traveled, picking up bits of "culture" to enable her later to move in the fringe of society and execute crimes which broadcast her name over the globe.

She married Ned Lyons and became implicated with him in bank robberies, safe-blowing and swindling operations involving millions of dollars. She was arrested a hundred times and locked up in fifty jails.

Forty-three years ago, on her release from the House of Correction in Detroit, Sophie resolved to "go straight." At about the time of her reformation she became the wife of Jimmy Burke, who earlier in life had been a notorious swindler. Despite her wealth, her home at her death was the little cottage in which they spent their honeymoon. Burke died in 1919.

Some years ago Mrs. Burke wrote "Why Crime Does Not Pay," a book in which she laid her finger on the falsity of the underworld's philosophy and set herself up as evidence that a crook can "come back."

Tricks of the Night

By JAMES W. EGAN

THE street appeared dark and quiet as Cleed came up from the corner.

It was after midnight; the neighborhood had been asleep for hours. In his own apartment dwelling no lights burned. He was the night owl, as usual.

Ascending the veranda, that was a part of the old-fashioned building, he happened to glance toward his bay-window, which fronted upon the street. White lace curtains, gently waving in the night wind, caught his attention.

Cleed's eyes narrowed. His window was open. Nobody had been in his apartment since early morning save the electrician, who had been sent to inspect the wiring. Surely he could not have gone away leaving the window open. Was something wrong?

Gingerly Cleed tiptoed along the veranda, one hand searching under his left shoulder for the small automatic he invariably carried. He found one of his window sashes raised high. Nor was that all. Peering through the waving lace, he could discern a faint spot of light playing upon his wall-safe. A nocturnal prowler was at work.

Cautiously, with drawn weapon, Cleed stepped inside. Silently and carefully he crept along the wall toward his light switch. He snapped on the electrics.

"Good-evening," Cleed voiced, his automatic leveled and ready.

The slim figure before the safe whirled, turning a handkerchief-masked face to Cleed. The burglar's hands went up.

"Off with that handkerchief," Cleed's command was curt. "I want to see your face."

Reluctantly the intruder complied. Cleed started.

"Why—it's a woman! May Seldon!"

The intruder averted her eyes.

"Yes, it's May."

"Well, well, this is interesting," Cleed smiled. "Sit down, won't you? I'll close the window, if you don't mind. A bit careless of you to leave it open, in the first place, might I add?"

Warily keeping an eye on her and holding his automatic in readiness for instant use, he drew down the sash. The intruder sank into an overstuffed chair near his library table. Cleed seated himself across from her, first brushing away a few flecks of rubber and bits of copper evidently left by the electrical worker earlier in the day.

"Now, why this unexpected visit, Miss May?" he demanded, trying to be bantering in tone. "What brings a pretty little girl to donning men's clothes and a mask and tampering with my safe?"

She remained silent.

"Dave Madison's sweetie, aren't you? I wonder if that fact has anything to do with this nocturnal call? Better talk up, my dear young lady."

"Dave Madison never killed old Simon Andrews," the girl stated sullenly, her head down. "You know he didn't, and yet you are trying to send him to the gallows."

"Madison is no good. He hated old Simon. Of course he killed him. The evidence——"

"The evidence is only circumstantial. What proof is there that he actually did the shooting? You want to be made prosecuting attorney this fall, and you are determined to get poor Dave. He——"

"Evidently Dave has been pouring his woes into sympathetic ears," observed Cleed. "But enough of that now. Why did you break in here? What were you looking for?"

"I—I don't know."

"Of course you know. Sent here, weren't you?"

"No, I wasn't. I——"

"Don't lie. Didn't Madison send you?"

"Why should he send me here?"

"I'm quite convinced he did. You can't fool me, May. Now, just what is the game?"

The girl was undergoing an inward struggle. Despite her ill-fitting masculine attire she was very pretty, Cleed realized, taking in her dark eyes and bobbed hair, her clear creamy complexion. About her was an air of refinement and breeding he hadn't appreciated on the former occasions he had glimpsed her. Strange she should be the sweetheart of Madison, an ex-convict and suspected murderer. It seemed incongruous.

"I—I didn't enjoy coming," the words came slowly from her.

"Then why are you here?"

"Dave told me you were not to be trusted. That you are framing it up to railroad him just like you have a lot of other unlucky devils. He says you know he didn't kill Andrews, but that you are going to get him, just the same, and try to add to your reputation. The only way to deal with you, he told me, was to get something on you. He figured there might be stuff in your safe that would help."

"How clever of him! And he picked a girl to turn the trick? Rather unusual, isn't it?"

"Oh, I had to help him. Who else is there?"

"You must think a lot of that jailbird to run such a risk, young woman. He's put you in a nice pickle."

May Seldon bit at her lower lip.

"It's odd how pretty, clever girls like you fall for roughnecks of Madison's type. I can't understand it."

"I—I love him," the girl whispered. "I knew there was but one chance in a hundred, and I took it."

"It has only plunged you in a mess."

"I don't care," defiantly. "I'm sure he isn't guilty of murder, and I believe you know it, too."

"Don't be silly, May. He'll hang for the crime. And now let's forget Madison for

a moment. Do you appreciate your situation?"

She regarded him dumbly. Cleed continued:

"You have been caught attempting to break into my safe. It means prison for you, Miss Seldon, unless——"

"Unless what?" she asked fearfully.

"Unless you and I can come to an understanding, May."

The girl eyed Cleed, his sallow face, his small sharp eyes, his bony hands. An odd expression flashed across her features and was gone.

"What kind of an understanding, Mr. Cleed?" Her tone had lost some of its dullness.

"I want to say a word about the Madison case, May. I think I can safely tell this to you—now. To begin with, I'll briefly sketch what we hold against your Dave. The evidence is circumstantial, of course, but here it is:

"Two weeks ago Simon Andrews was shot to death while in the room he occupied above his pawnshop. The shooting occurred between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, and the murderer evidently escaped by a back stairway. Nothing was taken from the shop. The policeman on the beat heard the shot. He says it was about twenty minutes to twelve. The murderer had fled before he could reach the scene. He found Simon dead, with a hole in his head.

"Investigation proved that a .32 caliber bullet made the hole. Dave Madison, known to have quarreled with the old man and even threatened his life on a couple of occasions, was suspected of the crime. He was arrested the next morning. A search of his room revealed a .32 caliber revolver. It was not loaded, but ample time to empty it had been given."

"Or hide it if he were guilty," interposed the girl.

"Perhaps. Madison was arrested, at all events. He could give no explanation of his whereabouts between eleven and twelve that night. He has said he was roaming around nowhere in particular. His story sounded extremely fishy."

"Yet I fail to see where you have any

thing conclusive against him," May Seldon commented.

"Well, the case seemed weak at first. Especially with young Hugh Emery hired to defend Madison. Emery is foxy, and he hates me. Also, he is friendly with the *Evening Bee*, the sheet which has been on me ever since I was put on the prosecuting attorney's staff. I knew I had a fight ahead.

"The idea quickly struck me that Emery would probably try to alibi Dave out of it. And who would be better to furnish that alibi than one May Seldon?"

"I?" cried the girl. "How?"

"Suppose you were to testify on the stand that Dave was with you when Andrews was shot, and could not have killed the pawnbroker. Emery knows that would hit the jury, all right. I suppose he has suggested it to you?"

"No, he hasn't. But how do you know Dave Madison wasn't with me at the time? He might have been shielding me when he refused to tell of his whereabouts."

"Don't be funny, May. Madison isn't the virtuous hero of a mid-Victorian novel. He's the type of crook who would perjure his mother to save his own neck. If he had been with you he'd have said so. But he wasn't. You'll never testify he was, either. Not after tonight. His conviction is a certainty now."

"Do you think any jury will swallow your flimsy evidence against him as sufficient?" the girl exclaimed. "I don't believe it."

"The case will be strong enough when the trial occurs, May. All the dope hasn't been broadcasted. Ever hear of Pete Derby?"

"Pete Derby? What has Pete to do with it?"

"Pete is going to be a very important witness," Cleed chuckled, enjoying the girl's expression. "The most important the State will have."

"But what in the world does Derby know of it?"

"Quite a bit. He will swear under oath that Dave and he planned to rob Simon Andrews the night of the murder, and that Dave was armed with his .32 caliber re-

volver, loaded. That he waited outside the pawnshop, in the rear, as a guard, while Dave went inside to do the work. Then he heard a shot and saw Dave come bounding down the stairs past him, muttering he'd 'got 'em.' Then, frightened, he fled himself, and hid out until we dug him up. Oh, yes, he'll tell this and more in great detail, and he'll just about hang Mr. Dave Madison."

"But Pete Derby and Dave were not together. Derby is a rat, anyway. He wanted to get me away from Dave, and Dave told him to leave town or he'd get him. Pete got out, too. I'm sure he wasn't in the city when the crime was committed, so how can he testify as you claim?"

"Pete will testify as I've told you," the prosecutor asserted.

"But he lies! He wasn't with Dave! I know it!"

"What difference does it make? That's the story he's going to tell. Derby hates Dave." Cleed smiled sardonically. "And then, too, Pete is wise enough to know what's good for him. He was found in a much worse scrape than you, May. He's got to be good."

"So you have framed Dave! You are trying to railroad him, Raymond Cleed! He was right. You convict men by treachery and false testimony even when they're innocent. That's the kind of an official you are!"

"Calm yourself, May. And just recall your own position, if you please. One false word or move, and you'll go to jail. You cannot dispute anything Derby says. You cannot alibi for Madison. You cannot help him or Emery in any way. Understand?"

"Oh, you——" May Seldon sank back in the chair with a despairing sigh.

"You are a little fool to listen to Madison—to come here at all! And now you are going to follow my orders!"

"You seem to have played in luck," she uttered helplessly. "Poor Dave! What will become of him?"

"Don't waste time on him. He'll be out of the running before long. You are too pretty a girl to bother with such carrion as Madison."

Cleed arose and pocketed his automatic. "Do you know, May," he muttered, "you are a prepossessing creature. I'd like to——"

She also was on her feet, eyes ablaze.

"You caught me at your safe, Raymond Cleed. Because of that you want me to let you send an innocent man to the hangman—to desert him like a rat—and even to throw myself into your arms while it is being done. That's it, isn't it?"

"Well," was the cool retort, "I ought to be more desirable than an ex-convict."

Abruptly May Seldon laughed—a scornful, derisive laugh. In a twinkling her expression had changed.

"You oily scoundrel!" she snapped out. "You framer! You've spilled your beans. All right, folks!"

These last words were spoken in a loud tone. Cleed immediately reached for his pistol.

"What's this, you hussy? Have you——"

Imperative hands began to pound on his locked door.

"Other visitors—more legitimate than I, perhaps," mocked the girl, going towards the door.

"Stop!" raged Cleed. "I'll not have that door opened! By heavens, I'll——"

The door crashed inward, cutting him short.

Cleed paled at sight of the three men who had unceremoniously invaded the room. He recognized them; knew all—Allan Babcock, a reporter on the hated *Bee*; Hugh Emery, attorney for Dave Madison, and Judge Clines, a well-known jurist.

"What do you want?" Cleed was in a fury.

"Oh, a number of things, Mr. Deputy Prosecutor," answered the reporter. "One probably will be your resignation from a department you've long dishonored. Don't you agree, Judge Clines?"

"I believe I would advise it," the jurist coldly expressed.

"You talk as if I had committed a wrong!" Cleed brazened. "I come home to find a young woman robbing my apartment. Then you three break in on me like this. Better be careful! I can make trouble for all of you."

"Miss Seldon was not robbing you," corrected Hugh Emery. "She was posing in front of your safe, waiting for you to come home. She left the window open to alarm you. A very risky and dangerous thing for her to try, but she insisted that she had to put through the scheme for the sake of Dave Madison, an innocent man. Miss Seldon planned this evening's work, Cleed. You'll find she is rather a clever girl."

"She is?" sneered the prosecutor. "I don't see it."

"Perhaps you'll understand when you are told Judge Clines, Mr. Emery and myself have been in the apartment above you for several hours," said Babcock. "I have had that room rented for quite some time, hoping to make use of it. And finally I have. We three have had the pleasure of overhearing you tell the absorbing story of the Andrews murder, the striking testimony to be introduced by one Pete Derby—as well as your insults to Miss Seldon."

Cleed's jaw sagged.

"You overheard?" he gasped.

"Everything, Cleed," Judge Clines declared. "That faithful old eavesdropper, the well-known dictagraph, did the business. You should have guessed it."

"Possibly you'll recall there was an electrician here today ostensibly to inspect your wiring," grinned the reporter. "We did more wiring than inspecting, Cleed. You not being here, the stunt was ridiculously simple. Everything was ready when you walked upon the scene staged by Miss Seldon, and all we had to do was listen and marvel. Old stuff, Cleed—but good, nevertheless."

"Because neither Mr. Emery nor Mr. Babcock is friendly toward you, Cleed, I was invited as a witness tonight," Judge Clines continued. "I have long felt you didn't belong in the prosecutor's office. Now I know it."

"So I have you to thank for this, Miss Seldon?" Cleed directed, eyes full of hate toward the girl.

"You wished to hang Dave Madison for a crime he didn't commit," May Seldon said slowly. "Whoever shot Simon Andrews, it was not Dave. I knew, however, only desperate measures could save him. I

talked it over with Mr. Emery and Mr. Babcock, and then tried this. I wanted to be found by you, for I was sure I'd learn a lot. And you ran true to form. Attempting to profit from the situation, you gave away more than you intended. And let me tell you something about Dave Madison, Mr. Cleed. He is a real man, whether or not he's been in prison. He is true blue, and I love him."

"Smart hussy, aren't you?" Cleed was ghastly pale. "But I'll get you! Caught robbing me, wasn't you? I guess that——"

"Guess again, Cleed!" Allan Babcock interrupted. "This will be a great story if the *Bee* publishes it. We might hold it back—but you'll have to have the case against Madison dismissed, resign from of-

fice and forget Miss Seldon was ever here. Or shall the public know all?"

"I—I won't—I——" the entrapped man blustered, and then gazed into the grim eyes about him. He read his doom. Weakly he dropped into a chair.

"It might be well for you to write your resignation now, so I can use it in the *Bee* tomorrow afternoon," the implacable newspaper man went on. "You'll have a chance to drop your charges against Madison and clear out your office a little. I see pen and ink before you. Break right into composition, Cleed, and make it snappy. We all want to go home. I'll tell you what to write."

And, voiceless, the cringing Cleed wrote at his dictation.

THE CRIMINAL LAWYER AND THE BURGLARS

FRANK W. STANTON, attorney, returned to his home after attending a prizefight at the Commonwealth Athletic Club, to find two burglars in his apartment at 605 West 175th street, New York. One of them had a revolver and flashlight in his hands. The other had Mrs. Stanton's pearl necklace and diamond wrist watch and Mr. Stanton's diamond tie pin and racing field glasses, the gems in all valued at \$4,000.

Inasmuch as Mr. Stanton specializes in criminal law, and in the nineteen years of his practice has defended many burglars of robbery, larceny and burglary cases he assumed an injured air. With his hands high up in the air, to assure the holdup men he intended no harm, the attorney opened his batteries of eloquence on them.

"Gentlemen," he began, "this is the reward I merit for my years of service, is it? How many of your brethren have I saved from prison and penitentiary terms? For all I know, I may have saved you at one time or other in the course of your careers. Where is your sense of honor and justice? Have you no gratitude?"

The first burglar pocketed his flashlight and revolver, abashed. His gem-laden accomplice stood with head bowed at the torrent of impassioned appeal. For twenty minutes the lawyer pleaded his case, and won.

"Here, take your stuff back," said the second bandit finally. "I'll be blowed if we'd rob you."

On his promise not to follow them the pair withdrew and a moment later were out of the house. In that moment, however, they managed to get \$1,000 worth of gems from the bachelor apartment of a Mr. Meyers in the building. When Mr. Stanton reported the case to the West 152d street police station he was congratulated on his presence of mind.

"Why, if I'd have talked to them ten minutes longer," he said, "I'd have had their bankrolls in addition to getting the jewels back."

He gave the police a complete description of the pair. No trace of them could be found when detectives accompanied him back to the apartment.

The Invisible Crime

By GEORGE MOREHEAD

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

IT was nine o'clock on a cold morning in January when Captain Brown, of an uptown precinct of the New York police department, reached his office in Harlem. His morning letters were lying on his desk. Among them he found this startling communication:

"DEAR SIR: My brother, John Marsden, is dying from poison, and I want your assistance. I would come to the station to see you, but I dare not leave my brother alone with the woman who is trying to poison him. That woman is Grace Marsden, my brother's wife. I am ready to swear to that before any judge. She is giving him arsenic. I ask your assistance to save my brother's life."

The letter was signed by Emmeline Marsden; the address was 199A Lenox ave.

The captain immediately telephoned to headquarters for Detective Charles Broome, who was one of the men assigned to that precinct. Thirty minutes later Broome entered the office and Captain Brown handed him the letter. After Broome had read it the captain asked:

"What do you think of it?"

"Well, I suppose we cannot ignore the appeal. We must make some kind of an investigation, if only to satisfy the writer."

"I think so and I have telephoned to Doctor Granite to go with you and report on the man's physical condition."

"I wish you hadn't done that, Captain."

"Why not?"

"I don't care to work with Doctor Granite. You call him in to report on the medical features of a case, then he gets inter-

ested in it and wants to take charge and run the whole thing his own way."

"You must admit he's rather clever," said the Captain. "I'm afraid you're jealous of him."

"No, but I want him to attend to his part of the case and I'll attend to mine."

The telephone rang. Captain Brown picked up the receiver, listened, and uttered an exclamation of surprise. He motioned to the detective to listen to the conversation by means of a telephone on the wall which was on the same circuit. Then the captain continued the conversation.

"Will you repeat the name, madam? I didn't quite catch it."

"Grace Marsden."

"And the address?"

"199A Lenox avenue."

"You say your husband is in danger of death?"

"Yes, he is being poisoned with arsenic."

"Who has given it to him?"

"I know quite well it was his own sister."

"Are you sure of that, madam?"

"Quite sure. I can prove it."

"What is her name?"

"Emmeline Marsden."

"Very well, Mrs. Marsden, we will attend to it. A detective and a doctor will be there within an hour."

The Captain laid down the receiver and gave a short whistle to express his surprise.

"Well, the plot thickens, and makes the case look interesting, each accusing the other of a serious crime. Ah! Here's the doctor."

Doctor Granite, who now entered the room, was a man of fifty or thereabouts, of medium height, an athletic figure and alert, nervous step; his smooth face was ruddy with the glow of perfect health, and his gen-

eral appearance was that of a man-about town who enjoyed the grosser pleasures of an everyday world. However, on the contrary, he was a man of studious habits, of scientific attainments, a specialist in toxicology. He had made a careful study of all forms of poison and the symptoms it developed in the human system. And he had a hobby: a devotion to criminology. He had studied the histories of the famous poisoners of all ages, from the time of the Borgias to the present day, and believed he had acquired a knowledge of all the subtle methods by which a criminal could administer poison to his unfortunate victim. He was called as an expert witness at the trial of every case which involved symptoms of poison. He had assisted the police many times in the detection of criminals who had recourse to the subtleties of that form of crime, attended, as it usually is, with so much secrecy and so much cunning.

"Good-morning, Doctor," said the Captain. "We have just been called upon to investigate a mysterious case of poisoning and would like to have your assistance. It is at a house on Lenox avenue, and Mr. Broome will explain it to you on the way there."

"Very good; we can start at once," said the Doctor smilingly.

CHAPTER TWO

TEN minutes later Doctor Granite and the detective entered the apartment-house known as 199A Lenox avenue. The elevator boy took them to the third floor and pointed out the apartment occupied by the Marsden family. They rang the bell. The door was opened by a young girl about twenty years of age, of slender build and medium height, with light brown hair, a clear, fresh complexion and large blue eyes that inspired a belief in the perfect innocence of her character. Surely there was no guile, no deceit, no suspicion of criminality in that fair young face, in those bright, clear eyes that shone with such apparent candor and honesty.

The detective informed her who they were and, with a smile, the girl replied in a soft, musical voice:

"I am pleased to see you, gentlemen, and I hope you will save my brother. You will, won't you?"

"We hope so; we will try. You are Miss Emmeline Marsden, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. Come this way, please."

She led them down a long corridor that ran through the center of the apartment, and before the last door on the left she stopped and gave a gentle knock. A key was turned in the lock and the door was opened by a young woman who stepped into the corridor and closed the door behind her.

"What is it, gentlemen?" she inquired.

"These gentlemen come from the police station," replied Emmeline, in a voice that betrayed a spirit of defiance and hatred toward the other woman.

"I was expecting them," declared the second woman in a quiet tone. "Come in, gentlemen."

She was, of course, the wife of the unfortunate man. Quite young and handsome, perhaps twenty-five years of age, a brunette with regular features, she had a pale olive complexion and large black eyes of liquid tenderness. Apparently her nature was gentle and affectionate, but her swarthy complexion and full red lips indicated a more passionate disposition than one would expect to find in the younger woman. It was, indeed, a strange situation. Here were two young and pretty women, possessed of refined and gentle natures, with every appearance of innocence and truth stamped on their delicate features, and yet each of them had emphatically accused the other of an infamous and deliberate crime.

The men followed Mrs. Marsden into a large square bedroom which was quite dark, as the only light was a shaded lamp near the head of the bed. It was sufficient to show the appearance of the patient who was lying there with closed eyes, and yet not asleep, as the rapid twitching of his face and the convulsive movement of his fingers clearly indicated. A man was sitting near the bed; he rose at once and spoke to Doc-

tor Granite, whom he knew by sight and reputation.

"I am Doctor Parsons," he said. "I have had charge of the case."

"For how long a time?" asked Granite.

"Two weeks."

The two medical men approached the bed, examined the patient and conversed in low tones. The two women remained near the door, but did not look at each other; they displayed a marked degree of nervous anxiety. After a consultation which lasted about fifteen minutes the doctors left the bedside, and Doctor Granite said to Mrs. Marsden:

"Have you a room where we can talk without being heard by your husband?"

She led the way to the living-room followed by all the others. Doctor Granite took a seat at a small table and proceeded to question Mrs. Marsden.

"When did you first notice the symptoms which now mark your husband's illness?"

"A little more than two weeks ago. My husband complained of pains in his head and dizziness, but he did not seem to be seriously ill. At last I observed signs of paralysis, especially in the arms. That alarmed me, and I called in Doctor Parsons."

Emmeline Marsden listened to this recital without any display of emotion beyond a cynical smile which seemed to express her disbelief. Then Doctor Parsons spoke:

"I must confess that at first I could not determine the cause of Marsden's illness. My diagnosis did not satisfy me, and might still have been incomplete if I had not received some assistance from Miss Marsden."

All eyes were now turned upon the young girl, who felt it was her duty to speak.

"In the first place," she said, "I was alarmed by the pronounced symptoms of paralysis, because there was nothing in my brother's prior condition of health to account for it. I consulted one of the doctors at the hospital where I was recently a patient, and it was he who suggested the idea of arsenic."

"And he was quite right," added Doctor Granite. "My own opinion is that, for at

least two weeks, Mr. Marsden has taken into his system minute doses of arsenic at frequent intervals, and he would have been dead now if it were not for the care and skill of Doctor Parsons. The patient is now hovering between life and death, and if the absorption of the poison is not stopped nothing can save him. If it is stopped at once he has a fighting chance for his life."

After the doctor had ceased speaking a deep silence pervaded the room. No one spoke for several minutes. It seemed as if they were all stunned, in some measure, by the gravity of the situation and the enormity of the tragedy in which they were all involved, either as fearful spectators or as active participants. It was Emmeline Marsden, the sister, who broke the awful silence. She raised her right arm and, with a menacing finger pointing at her sister-in-law, she exclaimed, in a solemn voice that trembled with emotion:

"I have accused that woman. I accuse her now."

"You—you dare say that," cried Grace.

"Yes; it is the truth."

"No, it's you. You are the guilty one."

Emmeline replied calmly, but with a mysterious, taunting smile:

"No insult coming from you can offend me. Tomorrow, tonight, perhaps, you will be a prisoner. I shall tell the truth to these gentlemen. They will be your first judges."

"Or yours," retorted Grace.

"I have no fear. I accuse you before them. You are the assassin of my brother. You do not love him; you love another. You deceived my brother, but you did not deceive me. I read your evil mind from the beginning. Today my poor brother is paying the penalty of his folly in marrying you and refusing to follow my advice. I say to you, gentlemen, I shall tell you everything—everything. My brother and I met this woman on a steamer coming from Europe three years ago. John fell in love with her at once. Up to that time I had been his constant companion since the death of our parents; but after we met her my brother ceased to love me; he loved only her. That caused me to hate her. But it

is not that hatred that makes me her accuser. I swear to that. I reveal the past simply to show more clearly the character of the woman I denounce. When we met her she was a widow, without means, almost a pauper. The love of my brother was her salvation. To gain his love and his fortune she sacrificed everything—everything. I have proof of that. Several times, before her marriage, I followed that woman; I saw her meet a young man. They conversed in a familiar and sometimes in a very affectionate way. At the last meeting I witnessed between them she was in tears, and I overheard part of their conversation. He spoke of certain promises they had made each other, and she told him that, to her, money was better than love. I told this to my brother, but he would not believe it. However, I now have further proof. Two weeks ago, just when my brother was taken ill, that woman lost a letter in the hallway. It fell out of her muff. Here it is—signed by some one who calls himself 'Harry.' Listen to what this letter says: 'Grace, since your marriage to a man I detest I have wept bitter tears. I have cried out in my agony and despair. Will she never be my wife? But I know that can never be. You have been stolen from me by a richer man.'

Emmeline now ceased to speak. The three men were fascinated, astounded, by the dramatic scene, so much so that they were unable to move or speak. Grace alone was calm and collected; she said:

"Go on."

"I will go on," continued Emmeline. "I would have given this letter to my brother, but he was already suffering from illness, and I did not wish to cause him sorrow and annoyance at that time. Oh, gentlemen, you cannot imagine what I have suffered through that woman. I have been treated in this house as a beggar. I have remained only that she might not have the satisfaction of driving me out. But she has used every means to turn my brother against me. There was no slander she did not invent, no lie she did not tell. During the last six months my brother has scarcely spoken to me. Now he is lying on his deathbed, and it is she who is killing him. She dismissed

the servant in order to have more freedom in the house. For a week she and I have been alone in the apartment; during that time I have scarcely seen my brother, but his condition is surely growing worse. The poisoning continues from day to day. Now, I am innocent; I swear it before God. But that woman, his wife, I accuse her. Everything points to her guilt: her past life, this letter, the desire to get the fortune that my brother has left to her by a will he made only a month ago, at her request—that is all I have to say."

After a brief silence, Doctor Granite turned to Mrs. Marsden and said:

"Do you wish to say anything?"

"Yes, I have an accusation to make—against her. There is only one grain of truth in all she has said, and that is the fact that she and I have lived here by ourselves with a dying man. Therefore, the guilty person must be one of us. It is not I. I swear to that."

She spoke in a voice that was quite firm and free from emotion. She continued:

"I do not have to render an account of my past life. I have never done anything for which I need to blush. Before I met John Marsden I had become engaged to another man, to the man who wrote that letter. Was that a crime? Who will reproach me for having chosen to marry John Marsden? If I did so because I feared a life of poverty—was that a crime? I have always been a loyal wife to him in every thought, in every deed. I have been as happy as any wife could be. Why, then, should I wish to kill him? For his money? That is absurd; I have always had everything I desired. It is true I dismissed the servant. Why? Because I feared that she might have given the poison to my husband. But I was deceived on that point. The absorption of the poison did not cease. The assassin was still in the house. Since yesterday John has not spoken; he cannot move. The paralysis is almost complete. I could not remain silent any longer. I accused my sister-in-law. I accuse her now. The assassin must be one of us. It is not I; it must be she."

She made this accusation in a calm voice, without any display of passion or emotion.

After an exchange of looks with the other men, Doctor Granite said to the women:

"Now that the affair is in the hands of the police, I think it advisable that neither of you should go near Mr. Marsden at present. If you have no objection, I will remain and act as his nurse until some other arrangements can be made. Is that agreeable to you?"

The two women nodded their acquiescence.

CHAPTER THREE

THROUGHOUT the day and the following night Doctor Granite sat at the bedside of John Marsden and administered the medicine which had been prescribed for the patient. The greater part of the time the doctor remained motionless with his eyes fixed upon the emaciated face of the dying man, which was pale and convulsed with pain. He thought of the two women who made such serious accusations against each other and sought to solve these important questions: Which of the two was telling a lie? Which one is the assassin?

In his judgment the two women appeared to be equally sincere, equally resolute in their dreadful accusations, and equally clever in the manner of presenting them. There seemed to be no way to choose between them. If Emmeline Marsden were the guilty party, what was her motive? To gain a portion of her brother's wealth? No, he could not think so for, although he was ignorant of the history of the Marsden family, it seemed to him that the parents of the girl must have left a considerable legacy to her as well as to her brother. Then, could it be an act of revenge? Perhaps. He remembered the bitter words and the hostile tone in which Emmeline had delivered her accusation. Then he recalled to memory the celebrated criminal cases in which offended pride had nerved the hand to commit a deed repugnant to its nature.

Had Doctor Granite already formed an opinion that Emmeline was the assassin? No, he was only seeking a spark of light

whereby he might kindle the torch of truth which alone could lead him through the sombre labyrinth of mystery and doubt.

Throughout the night John Marsden remained motionless; but in the morning he called for Grace, softly, feebly, in a tone of profound tenderness. Doctor Granite, acting in the spirit of chance and yet attaching a certain importance to his question, asked the patient:

"Would you not prefer to see your sister?"

Instantly John Marsden opened his eyes and, giving to his voice all the strength he could command, replied, with apparent fright:

"No, no; not Emmeline. I don't want her to come. I want Grace. Grace, help me; protect me."

He attempted to rise, but he was too weak. At that moment Doctor Granite heard a noise in the room. He turned and saw Mrs. Marsden standing at the door, pale and trembling. She said to him:

"May I come in? I heard him call for me. I have passed the entire night behind that door which leads to my room. May I go to John? He wants me."

The doctor nodded his consent. The wife went to the bedside, leaned over the sick man and spoke to him with great tenderness. She said:

"John, I am at your side; there is nothing to fear."

"I am sick. I am dying."

"No, no; you will get better. You will be saved."

Doctor Granite observed her closely and was deeply impressed at the sight of her sad face and the tears that coursed down her pale cheeks. She took one of her husband's cold hands and gently chafed it with her own, and was thus engaged when Emmeline Marsden rapped on the door. Doctor Granite opened it. The girl stood aside, and he saw there Detective Broome and a uniformed policeman.

"I wish to speak to Mrs. Marsden," said the detective.

Mrs. Marsden immediately left the room and joined the detective in the corridor. The latter said to her:

"I am sorry, Mrs. Marsden, I have a

disagreeable duty to perform; but I shall disturb you as little as possible. I wish to see your room."

She led the way to the door of the adjoining room and opened it with a key. It was her bed-chamber, simply but prettily furnished. It contained a bed, a wardrobe, a dressing-table, a chiffonier, a writing-desk, a small table and two easy-chairs.

"I will explain to you, Mrs. Marsden," said Broome, "that I have a search-warrant covering the entire apartment, but I will commence with this room, and I assure you I shall not disturb your goods more than is actually necessary."

"I am sure of that, Mr. Broome; go ahead."

The detective began his search by examining the contents of the chiffonier, but failed to find any poison or other evidence of guilt there. Next he examined the writing-desk with like result. Then he searched the drawers of the dressing-table, and found therein a small bottle filled with a colorless liquid, but without a label. He turned to Mrs. Marsden and asked her what the bottle contained.

"I do not know," she replied. "I never saw it before."

"Will you be so kind as to ask Doctor Granite to come here?" he said to Emmeline.

When the doctor entered the room the detective handed the bottle to him and asked him what it contained. After a brief examination the doctor declared it was a solution of arsenic.

"I found it in this drawer," said the detective.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders as he looked anxiously at the young wife. Mrs. Marsden, who was stunned for a moment by the doctor's statement, now exclaimed:

"It is not possible, doctor; there is some mistake."

"I am quite positive it is arsenic," said the doctor.

"But I swear to you that I am innocent. The bottle does not belong to me. I never saw it before."

"I am sorry, Mrs. Marsden," said Broome, "but I must ask you to go with me to the police station."

"As a prisoner?"

"Yes."

For a moment she stood with her hands pressed tightly against her bosom in an effort to stifle her emotion. Then she spoke in a bewildered tone:

"I suppose I must go; but let me see my husband for the last time."

"No, that would be useless," said the detective; "you must come with me."

She walked to the door, but stopped at the threshold and cast a look of defiance and hatred at Emmeline, who could no longer restrain her feelings of triumph over her downfallen sister-in-law. For Emmeline exclaimed exultingly:

"Ah, now my brother will be saved."

The prisoner, in a voice that was calm and low, but terrible in its intensity, replied:

"No; now he will be lost."

CHAPTER FOUR

MRS. MARSDEN was arrested on the twelfth day of January. During the following week Mr. Marsden's condition showed a slight but continuous improvement. It was apparent that the absorption of the poison had ceased. This circumstance pointed strongly to the guilt of the prisoner, and yet she stoutly declared her innocence.

Doctor Granite had ceased to watch at the bedside of the patient, but he called every day to observe the progress of the case. On the fifteenth day of January the care of the sick man had been confided to Emmeline, who was assisted by a trained nurse. For a few days all went well and the patient continued to improve. Then, suddenly, on the twenty-first of January, the tragedy was resumed; the patient became worse, the administration of the poison had recommenced. There was no doubt of it; the condition of the patient during the next three days confirmed the fact. His illness had materially increased. What conclusion must be drawn from this circumstance? That the assassin was still at work? That conclusion was inevitable.

Of course, the trained nurse was beyond suspicion. What then? The question then was: Was Emmeline Marsden the guilty party? It was almost impossible to believe in her innocence. The weight of evidence was against her. Accordingly, at nine o'clock in the morning of the twenty-fourth day of January, Emmeline was arrested on a warrant charging her with the poisoning of her brother.

The victim was taken to a hospital and placed in a private room under the care of two nurses. All the resources of medical science were employed to save his life. It was believed that he was now outside the danger zone, and that no more poison could reach him. After the lapse of three days he was much improved; he opened his eyes and spoke in a faint voice. The left side of his body was paralyzed, but his face was not affected. He was slightly delirious when he called for his wife.

"Grace! Grace! No, no, Emmeline must not come near me, I do not want her. I want Grace."

When Detective Broome reported this circumstance to Doctor Granite he added:

"Can it be possible that he knows the truth? Do you think he knows the guilty party?"

"Of course it is possible," replied the doctor, "but I do not think that he knows any more about it than we do."

"But this aversion, this fear, displayed by the brother against the sister, is another link in the chain of evidence against her."

"Then you believe in her guilt, do you?" asked the doctor.

"Absolutely."

"I don't—not yet. Let me ask you: Do you think it at all probable that Emmeline would be so foolish as to administer poison to her brother after the arrest of the wife? I cannot believe it. Consider the situation. Emmeline had become free from suspicion by the arrest of the wife for the crime. But any further administration of poison would necessarily cast all the suspicion upon Emmeline. Now, knowing that, would the girl be so foolish as to give her brother more poison? No, no, I cannot believe it."

"But, doctor, do you see to what point your argument carries you? Now, you assume that Emmeline is not guilty."

"Well?"

"And Grace Marsden may be innocent, so far as we know."

"She may be."

"And yet a man is dying, poisoned by one of these women."

"How do you know that?"

"There is no other solution."

"Yes, there is."

"Well, doctor, what is it?"

"Suicide."

(Concluded in our next issue.)

WOMEN HOLD-UP JAIL

HOWARD M. KEAVIN, scheduled to go on trial in Rochester, N. Y., for the murder of Aeneas McDonnell, Geneva policeman, on Feb. 19, escaped from the Ontario County jail at Canandaigua when the accused slayer's wife and sister held up a lone jailer. His wife escaped with him in an automobile.

No trace of the car speeding west in the direction of Rochester or its occupants could be found by police and State troopers who were scouring the countryside.

Keavin's wife and sister called at the jail about 3 o'clock and asked to see him, ac-

cording to Deputy Smith, who brought Keavin from his cell into the office where the women were waiting. When Keavin and the jailer entered the door Keavin's wife drew two revolvers, according to Smith, and ordered the jailer not to move or she would kill him. The sister passed another gun to Keavin.

Keavin and his wife dashed from the jail to a waiting machine driven by an unidentified man. In the excitement the sister stepped behind the barred door leading to the cellroom and Smith slammed the door shut. She is held at the jail

Caught In His Own Net

By ERNEST A. PHILLIPS

ALTHOUGH his real name was Jerry McDowell, the police and the boys who made "Jellyroll" Hogan's saloon their hangout knew him only as The Spider. This because of his frail and delicate build, and because of the stealthy manner in which he contrived to successfully accomplish his innumerable nefarious operations.

The Spider, to look at his long, thin fingers, his squinted eyes, his sunken cheeks and his sickly, yellow teeth, would never be taken for the character he actually was. But then looks are occasionally deceiving, and in his case they were very much so.

The Spider was one of the most dreaded criminals of the district. He was feared by his associates and by those policemen who were unfortunate enough to be sent on his trail.

"It's the funeral assignment, that's all," was the way Patrolman Swepston used to term it when ordered to trail The Spider. And less than a week later, when Patrolman Swepston died after being shot, presumably by The Spider, members of the organization believed he had spoken the truth.

They arrested The Spider, and they found a .39 special on his person. But when the coroner conducted an autopsy he removed a .45 steel-jacketed bullet from Patrolman Swepston's body. And yet—well, police who were assisting Patrolman Swepston in the raid would have sworn on a stack of Bibles piled as high as Pike's Peak that The Spider had fired the fatal shot. Less than two minutes after the shot had been discharged The Spider had been arrested on a blind stairway.

"You're headed up the river for this, Spider," Patrolman Clay snarled, jerking the crook around and barely able to control himself.

The Spider sneered as they frisked him, finding his .38 hanging in a little sling under his left arm-pit.

"Maybe," was all he answered.

The finding of a .45 steel-jacketed bullet in Patrolman Swepston's body had come like the explosion of a stick of dynamite to the authorities, so certain had they been that they now had the rascal trapped. The Spider's gun was examined carefully by the head of the department. The evidence produced showed that the only shots fired were discharged by the police and by The Spider. The police were equipped with .38 specials; The Spider had a .38 special on him when he was arrested, less than two minutes after Patrolman Swepston had been dropped in his tracks.

And yet—well, The Spider's lawyer, who drew an annual salary that would compare with that of a corporation attorney, succeeded in obtaining his release.

As the crook strode nonchalantly out of headquarters he chuckled.

"We're going to nail you yet, Spider!" declared Ed O'Malley, chief of detectives. "And when we do—well, you're going up for life!" Anger sparkled in O'Malley's glaring eyes; determination was displayed in the grim wrinkles about the corners of his mouth, and The Spider realized that the detective was speaking the truth. The crook feared O'Malley, feared him as he feared no man in the department.

"Maybe," was all he muttered as he stepped out of the door. He felt certain that he would be able to handle himself in such manner as to never again be caught in the net of the law.

Since the day of his release he had turned several crooked tricks. Some of his hauls had been exceptionally valuable.

And now the hunt was on again. The department suspected The Spider and

every patron of Jellyroll Hogan's knew it.

"I'll tell you, they're goin' to nab 'im," sneezed Peggy the Wop, a second-story man, as he drank a glass of white mule. "An' when they nail 'im, he's goin' up the river on a long, long journey."

Danny the Dip, flicking an imaginary grain of dust off his sleeve, shook his head slowly.

"He's been bumpin' these brass buttons off too often," ventured he. "It's all right to rock a guy off once in a while, but when you keep the slabs in the morgue occupied all the time—well, it eats into their hide." Danny sipped of his glass, then added: "That's why I went into the leather trade. It's safer. Besides, I wasn't born with the heart to drill 'em like The Spider does."

Flossy Henderson looked at Danny the Dip with a curious glint in her eyes. To her Danny was a mystery. She knew he was a pickpocket and that he always seemed flush. From this she merely took it for granted he was successful in his trade. She knew he had been hanging around Jellyroll Hogan's about two months, and that he was friendly with every cop in the district. And yet there was something about him that Flossy, who clerked in a ten-cent store, so as to have a plausible alibi in case she were accidentally caught in her trade of selling narcotics, was not quite able to unravel.

"Don't you worry about The Spider," she laughed at length. "He's able to take care of himself. Look how he squeezed out of that Swepston case. They're after him, all right, but The Spider's on his guard"—she glanced at the clock hanging on the wall behind her—"and he's due here pretty soon now, too," she added.

"The Spider coming?" asked Danny.

Flossy Henderson smiled and nodded.

The Dip shoved his chair back from the table and got to his feet. Looking over at the bartender, he shouted:

"Three more, Harry, then I've gotta beat it." Pulling the wrinkles out of his vest, he continued: "I had bad luck today and I've gotta step out and hoist a few toadskins. Besides, I don't want to

be around when The Spider's here—he's too blamed quick on the trigger for me. Might accidentally stop one of his stray—er—.45's."

At this remark Flossie Henderson frowned.

"What does he know?" she wondered, as she watched him pay the bartender.

"And then there's Ed O'Malley," continued Danny the Dip. "Bad hombre. When he gets after a guy he usually traps him. And there's an invisible pal who works in cahoots with him, too. Who is he? I've yet to see him, yet to learn, and you know, and every one of us is hep, that somewhere within our gang there's some stool-pigeon who's under O'Malley's control and tips him off."

Danny finished his drink and deserted the smoke-clouded room of Jellyroll Hogan's for the darker street outside. Shoving his hands deep into his pockets, he started cautiously, somewhat slowly, up the street.

After he had gone Peggy the Wop looked askance at Flossy Henderson.

"Slip me a pill, Flo," he whispered. "I'm—I'm shaky tonight, and I've got a good lay spotted, too."

She filled his prescription.

"How long have you known Danny the Dip, Peg?" Flossy Henderson questioned him later. For Flossy was worried and a troubled look was on her face. Mention of Ed O'Malley being after The Spider made her nervous, and mention of the mysterious stool who worked with O'Malley gave her cause for alarm. She felt very uneasy about The Spider, from whom she received sums of money with astounding frequency.

"Aw, Danny's all right, Flo," returned Peggy confidently.

Flossy Henderson felt relieved and sighed comfortably.

"I—hope so."

"An' he's a clever guy with his fingers, too, Flo," added the Wop. "Wish I had his ability."

As she looked at the clock Flossie shifted impatiently, nervously. The Spider was due now. She waited anxiously.

With his chin buried deep in the collar

of his overcoat, Danny the Dip had paused a fraction of a moment at the first corner. A shadow loomed before him. It was Ed O'Malley, chief of detectives.

Danny stooped down and fumbled at his shoe laces.

"Seen The Spider?" whispered the sleuth out of the corner of his mouth.

"He's due at Jellyroll Hogan's in a few minutes. Comin' in through the back entrance," returned the Dip as he straightened and shoved his hands back into his overcoat pockets; then he started up the street as naturally as though nothing unusual had occurred.

Danny had not taken a dozen steps before he heard a voice coming from a stairway at his right. He glanced up in alarm, there to see the dimly outlined face of One-eyed Charley, who worked with The Spider.

The strong-arm crook glared fiercely at Danny. There was an ugly, inhuman snarl on his thin lips.

"What did you spill to that dick?" demanded Charley through half-closed lips, as he shifted his right hand about in his overcoat pocket.

Danny the Dip could see that move, and he knew that a smashing automatic probably rested in Charley's hand.

"He wanted to know if I'd seen The Spider," stuttered Danny.

"What did you tell 'im?" growled the other as he squinted his strangely shaped eyes. "The truth, now."

Danny shifted nervously.

"I—I said I hadn't seen him."

"You lie!" came the alarming reply. "You're a dirty snitch, Danny! You're stoolin' for ther dicks, and you've got us guys believin' you're on the level wit us. I know you, Danny—I was in stir with you! An' listen: if I ever catch you spillin' anything about us to a dick I'm goin' to drill you so full of holes they'll think you was bumped off in a tong war—savvy?"

Danny dreaded this, for he knew that the burglar would keep his word. He was worried because he had been found to be a stool-pigeon.

"Aw, I wasn't snitchin'," he replied meekly.

One-eyed Charley made a move as

though to strike him. "Up the street with you, you four-flusher!" he snarled in anger, stepping back into the stairway.

Charley flung open the door and entered a dimly lit room where The Spider was seated before a little table.

"What did ya see, Charley?" asked The Spider, leaning back in his chair.

"Danny the Dip," came the growling reply.

The Spider chuckled.

"He's harmless."

"He's a snitch!"

The Spider frowned.

"Who, Danny—a snitch?"

"Jes caught 'im spillin' somethin' to Ed O'Malley," One-eyed Charley snorted.

The Spider's eyes popped wide open. So Ed O'Malley was after him, eh? The Spider did not exactly like this. He feared O'Malley, and feared the unknown person who was known to work with the chief of detectives. And now they were after him. The Spider smiled grimly.

"Easiest way out is to bump off O'Malley, Charley," ventured The Spider, after studying the problem several minutes. "I'll git 'im first pot shot."

One-eyed Charlie mumbled and The Spider got to his feet.

"Come on. Git your ulster on an' we'll go down to Jellyroll's and see what's up," The Spider growled as he got into his overcoat and felt of the .38 special dangling under his left arm-pit.

One-eyed Charley was not quite in favor of stepping out, with Ed O'Malley and his staff some place in the district. But then—well, he had linked himself with The Spider. Together they had reaped many a juicy haul, and together had they spent their money gloriously, tasting of every luxury the world offered.

Turning out the dim light, they closed and locked the door of their room, slipping almost noiselessly down the stairway. The Spider peered out cautiously. The block was clear.

As he left the stairway The Spider stooped down and ran his fingers along the stair-tread. He gave a little jerk, grunted, then smiled at what he was thinking. The Spider believed in being prepared. Know-

ing he might have to shoot unexpectedly from in front of the stairway, and knowing he might accidentally get caught before he could reach his room, slip through the window upon the fire-escape, and climb to the roof, to make a dash for freedom, The Spider had prepared a little trap.

It had already twice saved him. Patrolmen Crabb and Swebston had been shot near the spot and The Spider had been cleared of both charges. At thought of it he smiled.

Picking their way cautiously, ducking down a side street that was black as pitch, they reached a rear alley leading to the underground entrance of Jellyroll Hogan's. But just as they started to lift the manhole several forms sprang out of the darkness and a shot rang out.

One-eyed Charley moaned, clutched at his throat, then dopped in his tracks. Subconsciously he tried to maneuver his automatic, but sleep everlasting claimed him before he could achieve his desire.

At the first shot The Spider had darted swiftly away. As he wheeled he caught sight of One-eyed Charley crumpling to the ground, and he had seen the face of Ed O'Malley loom out of the blackness of night.

Another crashing sound as the detective sent a bullet whining by The Spider's head. Sticking his right arm in under his shirt, he grasped his .38 special and, with a glance backward, fired twice in rapid succession.

A yell, hurried shouts and the thumpity-thump of feet on the uneven brick pavement told him he had reached a human target.

Keeping close to the buildings, The Spider darted forward, swinging around a corner and veering toward his stairway. Even as he turned the corner a shot pinged by his ear, and to him it seemed as though he had caught sight of an unfamiliar shadow near his stairway. But The Spider had no time to pause and investigate.

He was hard pressed. Pounding noises sounded alarmingly close in his rear. He kept close to the buildings in the dark, as much as he could, in fear of being shot.

Yells rang behind him. The Spider clutched his revolver, flung open the door

and then stooped down. In the dark he knew those behind him could not see. When he rose he was clutching an instrument of death.

Then he caught sight of Ed O'Malley. Without pausing a fraction of a second The Spider pressed the trigger and two flashes of red flame darted from the gun he held. A thundering roar split the still night and Ed O'Malley keeled over against the building, slumping to the sidewalk.

A twist of the wrist and a movement of his foot occurred before The Spider ducked up the stairway and dashed for his room. As he reached the top of the stairway he heard footsteps below. Reaching for the key to his door, he turned and twisted it nervously, anxiously, excitedly. The lock was stuck. The Spider twisted and jerked the key, but the lock would not open.

Trapped!

He whirled and shoved his right hand into his open shirt, his face a deathly white. But before he could grasp his .38 special there was a crashing roar, and a bullet splintered The Spider's right wrist.

"I guess you've done your last dirty work, Spider," calmly and coolly said Patrolman Buie, as Detective Alcott stepped up beside him and placed a pair of handcuffs about The Spider's wrists. "We got you right this time, even if you did plug O'Malley."

"Maybe," was all The Spider had to say in reply, as he was jerked to his feet and dragged down the stairs, after being searched and relieved of the .38 special that had hung under his left arm-pit.

"How's Ed?" asked Detective Alcott, when they had reached the street.

"Oh, a little flesh wound," came the encouraging reply. "The bullet is still in his leg. Plugged him in the calf. They'll have to operate to get the bullet out. Nothing serious. He ain't bleeding much."

Detective Alcott looked at The Spider.

"What will you plead this time, Spider?"

The crook remained silent. He knew any words he might say would be used against him in court. He long ago had learned that silence is the best policy.

"Not talkin', eh?" sneered Alcott. "Well, we haven't been able to stick you for that

Van Meter jewel theft; we haven't been able to pin the Silcott job against you, either—but this is enough to send you up the river."

"Maybe," The Spider remarked. "How's One-eyed Charley?" he added anxiously.

"He's where you'd been if I'd got a good shot at you," came the cold return from Detective Alcott. "He's out of our way forever, and you're on the same voyage."

At Central station the physician removed the bullet from Ed O'Malley's leg with little difficulty. O'Malley gazed at the bullet in amazement, then he handed it over to Lieutenant-Sergeant McPhee.

"Did—did The Spider plug me?" demanded O'Malley queerly.

Lieutenant-Sergeant McPhee frowned.

"This is a .45 caliber steel-jacketed bullet!" Chief O'Malley was puzzled.

"Cussed strange we can't break that up," he roared in anger. "There's two men he's bumped off, and we haven't been able to stick him for either crime. I go out after him and get plugged myself. I know The Spider shot me—yet here's a .45 steel-jacket taken from my leg, and all we find on The Spider is a .38 special, like our own. Now, how in the name of thunder is that, say?"

Chief O'Malley glared around savagely, moving his bandaged leg with ease and tenderness. "Bring The Spider in here!" he thundered later.

The crook, his sunken cheeks presenting a sickening appearance, his thin fingers covered with cigarette stain, his squinted eyes carrying a glossy stare, was led into the front office to face the man he feared.

"Sit down!" yelled O'Malley, pointing to a vacant chair.

The Spider took the chair.

"Well?" he sneered.

"You got me, and we got you, isn't that it?" snarled the chief.

The Spider smiled.

"Yes," he answered coolly.

"And, as usual, we got a .38 off you, and you left a .45 steel-jacket in my leg, isn't that it?"

The Spider started rolling a cigarette.

"You bumped off Crabb and Swepston,

and you tried to rock me away tonight, Spider," the Chief rambled on. "We can't stick you on this but listen"—and the Chief leaned over and glared into The Spider's squinted eyes—"I'm going to frame you, and we'll testify that a .38 special was taken from my leg, savvy? We're going to frame you, Spider! We're going to send you up the river for life—life! Think that over and let it soak in. Take him out of here."

The Spider, getting to his feet, looked at the Chief and said through curled lips: "The only way you guys stick a guy is to frame 'em." Then he was led away to his cell.

Chief O'Malley broke out into a hearty laugh.

"We've got him worried. He's afraid we're going to frame him for fair. Some departments might frame guys and send them up, but this one won't. See if Frank Markle is outside there yet."

An assistant stepped into the inner room. "Chief's ready, Frank," he said.

Detective Markle got to his feet and entered the office of his superior.

"Any luck?" greeted the Chief.

For reply Markle pulled an automatic out of his coat pocket and slipped it upon the Chief's desk.

A gasp of surprise came from O'Malley at sight of the automatic, for it was a .45 caliber.

The Chief did not touch the automatic. He merely gazed at it, a smile on his lips as he nodded his head.

"Call Perkins down from upstairs," he commanded.

A few minutes later and Perkins, the fingerprint expert, had taken prints off the automatic. He compared them with prints on file of Jerry McDowell, alias The Spider.

"They're the one and the same," he declared in the end.

The Chief slipped the automatic into a desk.

"Bring The Spider in here again," he ordered, leaning back in his swivel chair so to rest his injured leg.

The Spider was led in and seated. Chief O'Malley stared at him a few moments be-

fore speaking. Then he opened the drawer and picked up the automatic, sticking it under The Spider's eyes.

"Ever seen this before?" he thundered.

The Spider, taken off his guard, wavered for a fraction of a moment. But he remained silent, merely looking up at the Chief. He started to lower his glance again, but he caught sight of a familiar figure. He found himself looking at Danny the Dip.

"You—you dirty squealer!" snarled The Spider, unable to control himself.

Danny the Dip, alias Frank Markle, city detective, smiled.

"It was a clever scheme you had, Spider," he said. "But you were trapped in your own net. One-eyed Charley's headed for the clay now, and I hate to talk about a dead man; but he's responsible." At this point Markle, Chief O'Malley's mysterious assistant, paused a moment as he pulled a cigar from his vest pocket.

Chief O'Malley looked on interestedly. He nodded to his assistant to continue.

"One-eyed Charley stopped me tonight, right in front of your stairway. I had to stand there quite a little while taking his line of talk. And I found myself standing right on that little trap manhole you had in the hall. After One-eyed Charley went upstairs I was curious to see what that little manhole really was. I waited until you two birds came down out of there, then I slipped in to investigate.

"Chief," he proceeded, turning to face his superior, "I found a clever little trap. Not very large. I pried it open. It was only six inches deep or so—and in it lay the au-

tomatic you have there, the one that killed Crabb and Swepston, the one that he fired at you with tonight."

Markle paused again, puffing at his cigar. The Spider sat motionless, his face ashen pale, grimness showing in his sunken cheeks.

"What he's been doin' is carrying that .38 around as a stall, Chief. He never shoots to kill with it; merely fires blindly; but once you chase him to his stairway, he pulls up that little manhole, jerks out the automatic, fires with deadly aim, and then slips the automatic back into the manhole and darts up to his room. This leaves a .45 steel-jacket in his victims while he only has a .38 special on him when arrested. You see, it's so dark there that a fellow has to be within ten feet of him to see what's going on—and I was right there tonight!"

The Spider winced, remembering now that strange shadow he thought he had seen as he rounded the corner.

Chief O'Malley was silent for a few moments, drumming the desk with a pencil. At last he whirled about carefully in his swivel chair and faced Markle.

"It was nice work, Frank," praised the Chief. "You're next in line for promotion. And, besides, you're too good for stool work. I——"

"Fine force having an ex-con on it," cut in the defeated Spider with a nasty sneer. "He did time with One-eyed Charley!"

Chief O'Malley smiled. "He was framed, you mean, Spider; framed by One-eyed Charley, and he swore revenge—and he got it." Turning to one of those in the room, the Chief said: "Lock him up again," and The Spider was led away.

MAIL THIEF WALKS AWAY

JOHNN BARRY, pal of "Big Tim" Murphy, Chicago labor leader, now serving a term in Leavenworth Federal Prison for the Dearborn Street Station mail robbery, who was convicted with Murphy, walked out of the Federal Building and made his escape just after hearing an order denying his right to appeal and af-

firming a sentence of four years' imprisonment for the mail robbery.

Barry not only eluded the Federal officers but walked past six policemen from the State Attorney's office who had been waiting to arrest him on a State charge. If he fails to surrender he will forfeit a \$50,000 bond.

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

The article "What Does Your Handwriting Tell You," which appeared in No. 157, brought us such a flock of inquiries and requests for service on graphology that we have started such a department, conducted by Miss Rice. She is well known for her character delineations based on deductions from specimens of handwriting. We wish to make this a helpful department for our readers. Send us specimens of your handwriting, Miss Rice will analyze them, and the reading will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of answers can be published at a time in each issue owing to lack of space. If you desire an early reply and personal letter from Miss Rice, cut out the coupon on page 68 and send it to us, enclosing 10 cents and a stamped envelope to cover the cost of stationery, handling, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you a personal reading. The following are answers to a number of our readers who have written to Miss Rice.—THE EDITOR.

X. X. X.—I am sorry to say that your writing shows you are abnormal. You are just off balance because of being too centered on yourself. You are too introspective—without enough occupation to awaken

said I lacked ambition
in never doing or being

self-confidence. You should study to think more of other people. Forget that you are the only person in the world, and take up a line of work that will keep your mind centered on it. You have plenty vital force, but haven't cultivated it.

A. B. C.—Here's a fire-eater, if chiromancy counts for anything in the science I follow. This fellow's mind is unbalanced, and dangerously so, for he believes in the

right to regulate the world by fire and sword. The very extraordinary formation of the letters shown with the upright

all the are
the are

strokes and the coarse shading is very characteristic. It is the business of such a man to come down from his lofty perch and do a little figuring about the rights of other people on this mundane sphere. Cut out the bluster and the overbearing deportment, and people will like you much better. You are evidently addicted to joining clubs and vocal fireworks, but you are a good thinker. Trouble is you've reversed all the philosophy you've ever heard.

THOMAS D.—A careful study of the specimen you sent shows plainly that you are what is termed a pessimist. Your view of life is from the gloomy angle. Why don't you cultivate a less morbid attitude? It is my impression that you would succeed better if you assumed a more pleasant and congenial manner. You should qualify as a good musician, and also show a talent for mechanical drawing. In other words, you might develop into a good architect, as your taste for music is not as great as that for drawing. You are an orderly, neat and very painstaking man, with a good command of language and an inclination toward the higher mathematics. I should judge you are middle-aged, and are somewhat set in your ideas.

Read Our Next Issue!

IT is going to contain a larger number of stories than we ever gave you before. The feature was written by MISS BEULAH POYNTER, a talented playwright and author, whose splendid detective stories you have read in this publication from time to time. The title is

"AT 2 A. M."

It contains a puzzling mystery and some of the most ingenious detective work in unraveling an interesting plot.

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The second and concluding installment of our two-part serial

"THE INVISIBLE CRIME"

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will appear in the next number, and as the interest in this story keeps growing as the plot progresses you will be very much pleased with the concluding chapters

THE SHORT STORIES WILL BE

"THE AVENGER," by Gilbert Hammond

"313?" by Peter Perry

"SOLVING SOL'S FACE," by Walter Archester Ellis

"THE KNOB-KNOCKER," by William Allen Ward

"TWO-GUN MUSSES THE PLAY," by Edgar Daniel Kramer

"THE MILLS OF THE GODS," by Hamilton Craigie

"TOO MANY KEYS," by J. B. Warrenton

We are preparing a batch of specially interesting short articles on a variety of subjects. From this résumé our readers can see that the next number will be an extra good one. Every story and article is the best that money could buy and we are exerting every effort to make this magazine the best on the newsstands. If our readers will recommend "Mystery" to their friends we would be grateful.

THE EDITOR.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

- 102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
- 103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
- 105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
- 107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
- 108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Slagg.
- 109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
- 112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
- 113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
- 114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
- 115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
- 116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
- 117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
- 118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
- 120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
- 121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static.
- 122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
- 123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
- 124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
- 125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
- 126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
- 128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
- 129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
- 130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
- 132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt.
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- 134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
- 135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
- 137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
- 138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
- 139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
- 141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
- 142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
- 143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
- 144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
- 145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
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- 147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
- 149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
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- 152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
- 153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
- 154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

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The price of the following numbers is 15 cents:

- 155 "Laughing Death's Trail," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
- 156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
- 157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
- 158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
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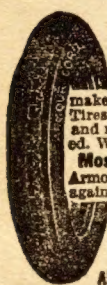
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Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

Along-Sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.

By Walter S. Dean

*Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!*

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes



recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

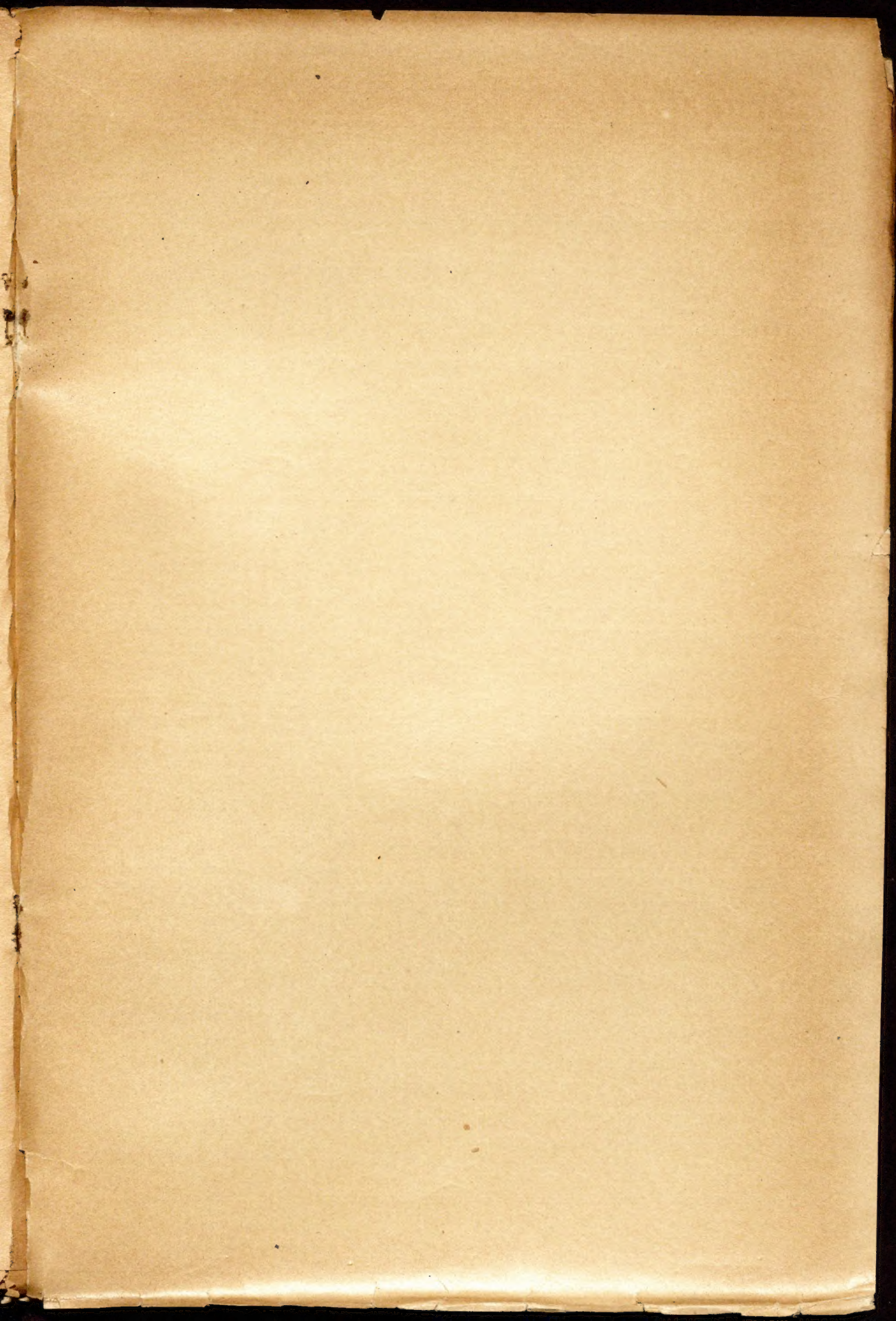
Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only \$2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

Simply write in confidence to the Melton Laboratories, 2178 Melton Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and this wonder restorative will be mailed to you, sealed in a plain wrapper. You may enclose \$2 or, if you prefer, just send your name without money and pay the postman \$2 and postage when the parcel is delivered. In either case, if you report within ten days that you are not satisfied, the purchase price will be refunded on request. The Melton Laboratories are nationally known and thoroughly reliable. Moreover, their offer is fully guaranteed so no one need hesitate to accept it. If you need this widely praised and remarkable rejuvenator, write for it today.





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